A Friendly Debate

BETWEEN A

CONFORMIST

AND A

NON-CONFORMIST.

The fifth Edition Corrected.

LONDON:

Printed for *R. Royston*, Bookseller to the King's most Excellent Majesty. 1669.

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Betwixt two Neighbors,

The one

A CONFORMIST,

The other

A NON-CONFORMIST.

About ſeveral Weighty Matters.

Publiſhed for the benefit of this City, by a Lover of it, and of pure Religion.

Prov. 15. 32.

He that refuſeth inſtruction deſpiſeth his own ſoul: but he that heareth reproof getteth underſtanding.

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Prov. 15. 22.

He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.

To the Reader.

Reader,

DO not throw away this little Book as soon as ever thou meetest with something that offends thee; but sit down rather, and consider upon what account thou art offended. If it be only because the Author contradicts thy Opinions, and perhaps accuses them of folly, thou hast cause to turn thy displeasure from him upon thy self, for presuming so much of thy own infallibility: which if thou wilt not pretend unto, then read on further, and consider whether he contradicts thee with reason, or without: and howsoever it prove, thou wilt not repent thee of thy pains. For if he reprove thy Opinions without reason, thou wilt be more confirmed in them; if with reason, thou maist exchange them for better. It is possible, indeed, that some things may seem to be expressed too tartly and severely, and others too lightly and merrily: but let not that put thee out of humour neither, nor make the reason worse offered less considerable. For the Author (I can assure thee) hath no gall in him, nor was in any passion when he writ these things; but intended only (as naturally as he could on a sudden) to express such Discourse as Neighbors are wont to have in their private conversations; in which if there be nothing that is smart or pleasant, they can scarce keep one another from

steeping. He is very well aware under what great prejudices we all labour: and considers how hard it is to dispossess an Opinion, though false, nay ridiculous, which a man hath suck'd in with his mothers milk, and which hath been impressed on him by education, confirmed by custom, much encouraged by the consent and practice of those with whom he daily converses, and hath perhaps his complexion and natural temper to befriend it, and incline him to it. Upon such considerations as these he cannot be angry with those against whom he writes, but rather pities them, and is sorry they consider not such things themselves; and so repress that heat and passion wherewith they advance their own private late inventions, against publick Decrees and ancient Constitutions. One sort of men (he confesses) are apt a little to move his indignation, who pretend to the greatest niceness of conscience, and have handled the matter so as to be thought the most religious of all others; and yet make no scruple to do those things continually which are utterly contrary to good conscience. (So, I believe an understanding Heathen or Turk *would resolve, were he made judge in the case, and had first their Principles, and then their Practices, laid before him.) Such the Author thinks deserve to be rebuked; and if there be any thing spoken with sharpness in the ensuing Discourse, it is when he hath to do with them. Yet in that case he hath used due mode-*

vation, not ſtudying to vex men, but only to waken and convince them. For he is very ſenſible that when we go about to diſplace any Opinion, and introduce another in its room, we uſually loſe our labour, if we either fail to propound our mind dexterouſly, or uſe not ſuch meekneſs as may ſhew we have a good will to thoſe from whom we differ. Where theſe are wanting; inſtead of inviting men to receive a Truth, we find they are commonly further alienated from it. Now he hath ſome confidence he is not much defective in the firſt, having taken care to expreſs his mind clearly and in plain words, and contrived his Diſcourſe into the form of a Dialogue, to make it more eaſily apprehended. As for the Latter, he cannot but think that he hath done his duty, and teſtified his kindneſs every where, even to thoſe againſt whom thou mayeſt think him moſt ſevere. But if thou judgeſt otherwiſe, then he earneſtly beſeeches thee to overlook it and paſs it by, as an inconſiderate and haſty expreſſion; and to weigh rather what Truth is here preſented to thee, than in what manner it is delivered.

In ſhort, If it had not been to fill up ſome vacant pages, he had made almoſt as ſhort a Preface as thoſe words of the Son of Sirach *(according to which he expects the ſucceſs of his labour.)* Eccluſ. 21. 15. If a skilful man hear

hear a wise word, he will commend it, and add unto it: but as soon as one of no understanding heareth it, it displeaseth him, and he casteth it behind his back.

Examine all things, and judge righteous judgment.

Octob. 20. 1668.

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A Friendly Debate
BETWEEN
A *Conformist*, and a *Non-Conformist*.

Conf. GOOD morrow Neighbour: I am very glad to see you, and you are wellcome home.

Non-Conf. I thank you kindly. But I do not understand your salutation, not having been from home this twelve-month.

C. No? what's the reason then that we have not seen you at Church of late?

N.C. I believe you did not see me: but I assure you the Church never wants my company.

C. How can that be? Are you there as the Angels are, after an invisible manner?

N.C. Pish! you do not apprehend me. Do you take your house of stone to be a Church?

C. Yes indeed do I: and (as I have been inform'd by them that know it) it is more properly called so, than your Assemblies. For the English word *Church*, Originally signifies an house of the Lord for Christians to worship in; as I have been told by our Minister.

N.C. Minister? he may be the *King's* Minister perhaps, but he is none of *Christ's*.

C. My good neighbor, do not grow warm so soon; for you and I must have a great deal of Discourse together. Pray walk in here to my house.

N.C. Well, what have you to say for your Minister?

C. This I say, that he is both the *King's* Minister and *Christ's* also: whereas I have reason to fear he whom you follow is neither.

N.C. Fare

N. C. Fare you well.

C. Nay, ſtay a little, and hear me out. How can he be the Miniſter of *Chriſt*, who is diſobedient to his Sovereign, whom *Chriſt* bids him obey?

N. C. Diſobedient? Yes, in thoſe things which *Chriſt* hath forbidden him to do. And therein I hope you will be content he ſhould *obey God rather than man.*

C. I knew this would be your anſwer. But, what if I prove that he is diſobedient even there where *Chriſt* and his Laws are not at all concern'd?

N. C. You cannot do it.

C. Why, what Law of *Chriſt* is there that requires him to live in *London*, or at leaſt within five miles of it?

N. C. None that I know.

C. But the Law of the Land forbids him to live in this place, or within ſuch a diſtance. And yet notwithſtanding he lives here in defiance of that Law, which you confeſs is not contrary to *Chriſt*'s. And being here, he lives alſo in the breach of a great many other Laws.

N. C. That was a Tyrannical Law.

C. Very good. But it is not repugnant, you are convinced, to the Commands of *Chriſt*; and therefore he is not a good Subject, and conſequently not a good Chriſtian; much leſs ſuch a perſon, as a Miniſter of *Chriſt* ought to be.

N. C. Would you not think it hard to be ſo abridg'd of your liberty?

C. Yes, without doubt. But, if we muſt never ſubmit to ſuch things, as we count harſh and rigorous, then farewel all the Doctrine of *Chriſt* concerning *taking up our Croſs*, and *ſuffering patiently*, &c. Which Doctrines, if you had ſtudied, you would not have uttered ſuch a word as implies the *King to be a Tyrant.*

N. C. Pray pardon me that raſhneſs.

C. I do moſt readily, and hope you ask God pardon

for

for this, and all other your rash words & actions. But that I may a little further convince you of that we were speaking of; I beseech you tell me, what Law of *Christ* is there that enjoyns him whom you follow to hold his Assemblies just then, when the publick Service of God, established by Law, begins? Is not this sufficient to convince any unprejudic'd man, that he is not content to enjoy his own way of worshipping God, but he would also destroy ours? That is, not only to act contrary to a Law, but to endeavour to subvert what is enacted by it? Else, why might it not suffice him to begin when the publick Service is done?

N. C. For that I cannot tell what to say.

C. Then I can make an answer for you. Your Minister is afraid, lest any of you should go to Church, and like our Minister so well, that you should think there is no need of him.

N. C. Away, away! There is no danger of that. He so far excels yours, that if we should come to hear him, it would only make us like our own the better.

C. Wherein (I pray you) doth this excellency consist?

N. C. O Sir, he is a very *powerful man*. Yours is a meer Dr. *Dulman* in compare with him.

C. What do you mean? that he hath a louder voice, that he is more vehement, and lays about him more than ours? Or what is it? If you take *him* to be powerful, who presses his Doctrine with strong and powerful reasons, such as we cannot gainsay or resist; I believe our Minister will prove the more powerful of the two.

N. C. It may be so. I have heard indeed that he is a man of Reason: but what is that to the *Demonstration of the Spirit, and of power?*

C. True: there is no compare between these. But hath your Minister that Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power.

N. C. Yes

N.C. Yes sure, if ever any man had.

C. That's good news; for then we shall *see* that which before we only *believed*. Hath he the gifts of the Holy Ghost? Can he speak with tongues, and Prophesie, and work Miracles, and tell us the thoughts of mens hearts?

N.C. What do you mean?

C. I mean that which the Apostle Saint *Paul* meant, who had this *Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power*; which he gave the world, to convince them that *Jesus* was risen from the dead, and was made Lord of all, whom they were therefore bound to obey.

N.C. But I mean something else.

C. Pray tell me what that is. Only let me desire you not to use words, without the sense belonging to them; and to intreat your Minister, that he would hereafter forbear to pray to God that he may speak in the *Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power*; for no body now can hope to do it.

N.C. I mean, that he is spiritually enlightned to *search the deep things of the Spirit of God, which the natural man cannot discern.*

C. I wonder at you, that you should not discern the Apostle there speaks of the Holy Ghost (*i.e.* the wonderful gifts of it) in them, which assured them of those things that no meer natural Reason could prove. I doubt your Minister is not spiritually enlightned, because he doth not instruct you better in the Scriptures.

N.C. Scriptures? He never says any thing, but he quotes a place of Scripture for it. All his Sermons are nothing else: whereas yours are but Rational Discourses.

C. I remember I have heard a wise man say, that one may talk nothing but Scripture, and yet speak never a wise word. And I verily believe it; for it is not the Word of God when we mistake its sense, as you commonly do.

N.C. Doth yours do any better?

C. Yes:

C. Yes: he seems to me to make it his business to let us into the meaning of the holy Book. And he backs his Reasons, not with phrases snatch'd from thence, but with such places as manifestly speak the same sense that he doth

N.C. I have heard him sometimes endeavor to open the Scripture, but methinks he doth not do it in a Spiritual way, but only Rationally.

C. My good Neighbour, consider what you say. Do you think that these two words, *Spiritual* and *Rational*, are opposed the one to the other? If they be, then *Spiritually* is as much as *Irrationally* and *absurdly*.

N.C. No, pardon me there, I do not think those two are opposite, but Carnal Reason is opposite to the Spirit.

C. To speak properly, you should say that Carnal Reason is opposite to Spiritual Reason: That is, a Reason that is guided by Fleshly lusts is opposite to that which is guided by the Gospel of *Christ*.

N.C. I say, as I said before, it is opposite to the Spirit.

C. You must either mean as I do; or else that it is opposite to the Gospel, which is frequently called the *Spirit* in Scripture. But, pray tell me, how shall we understand the Gospel, by our reason, or by something else?

N.C. By the Spirit.

C. What! must we have an immediate Revelation to make us understand its sense? or must we study and consider, and lay things together, and so come to know its meaning?

N.C. Yes, we must give our minds to it, and then the Spirit enlightens us.

C. That is, it guides us to reason, and discourse, and judge aright. Is not that it you mean?

N.C. No; I mean it shines into our minds with its light.

C. These are phrases which I would have you explain if you can. My Question is this, Doth the Spirit shew us

any new thing, which is not the concluſion of the Reaſonings and Diſcourſes in our minds about the Senſe of Scripture?

N. C. I cannot ſay it doth.

C. Then you confeſs that the Scripture is to be interpreted in a Rational way; we not having that which is truly to be called Spiritual in diſtinction from the other, viz. the immediate revelation of the Holy Ghoſt, which the Apoſtles had.

N. C. Still I cannot think that this is Spiritual.

C. That is, you are prejudiced: or elſe you phanſie every thing that you do not underſtand to be Spiritual.

N. C. No, not ſo: but the manner of underſtanding the things of God, methinks, ſhould be other than you conceive.

C. Truly, if you have any other manner of underſtanding beſides this, and have not the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; I conclude you take the ſudden (and many times pretty) ſuggeſtions of Imagination to be Illuminations from above.

N. C. Now you have hit on ſomething that I would have ſaid: The Spirit doth often dart things into my mind.

C. How know you that? Do you take every thing that comes into your head you know not how, to be an Irradiation from the Holy Ghoſt?

N. C. No, I dare no ſay ſo.

C. Then you examine it, and conſider whether it be rational and coherent, or no.

N. C. Yes.

C. Then you fall into our way whether you will or no. And whatſoever you think of us, we do not deny but God's good Spirit puts good thoughts oft-times in our minds, and repreſents things more clearly to us than we could make them by all our reaſonings: which is as much

as to say, that it lets us see the reasonableness and aptness of such a Sense (for instance) of the Divine Writings as we discerned not before.

N. C. Well, I am glad to hear you speak so much of the Spirit.

C. You might hear ten times as much, if you would but frequent our Assemblies. For there we are constantly taught, that the very ground and foundation of our Faith in *Jesus Christ* is the *Spirit*, *i. e.* the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven upon our Saviour and his Apostles.

N. C. You mix so much of Reason with what you say, that I am afraid you are not in the right.

C. You should rather conclude the contrary, and not believe any thing but what you have a good reason for.

N. C. Say you so? How then shall I believe that *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God? Can Reason tell me this?

C. I am sorry to see you so ill instructed. If you had continued to hear our Minister, he would have made you understand before this time, that though our reason could not find out that Truth, yet God hath given us the highest reason to believe it. And this I told you is the Spirit; the Spirit in *Christ* and in his Apostles.

N. C. Pray explain your meaning, for I understand not these new Notions.

C. The Holy Ghost (I mean) descended on our Saviour at his Baptism, with a voice from Heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* This is one reason we have to believe on him. Then he wrought miracles by the power of this Spirit, and though he was killed, yet he was raised again from the dead by it; and after that he sent the Spirit upon his Apostles, who thereby *demonstrated* that he was *the Son of God with power*. Which are all reasons for my belief; and if you have any other I would gladly hear them, or know whether

you believe without any Reason at all.

N. C. These are Spiritual Reasons.

C. I like your Language very well: only remember that these are the Divinest Reasons which cannot be resisted. For thus our mind argues with it self: That which God testified by voices from Heaven, and by a world of Miracles, is to be believed; that *Jesus* is his Son, he did in this manner testifie; therefore we are to believe that he is God's Son.

N. C. Who taught you to reason on this fashion?

C. Is this such a mighty business, that you wonder at it? We are taught continually to give our selves these reasons, why we should believe: And methinks it is the most powerful preaching in the world. For, if I believe firmly that *Jesus* is the Son of God, is risen from the dead, and will come to judge the world; how can I chuse but obey him with great care and constancy?

N. C. You say true. But methinks there is more Spiritual Preaching than this.

C. What should that be?

N. C. To preach the great Mysteries of the Gospel.

C. Is not this the first great Mystery of Godliness? *God manifested in the flesh?* (1 *Tim.* 3. 16.) and is not this the next, that he was *justified in*, or, *by the Spirit*; which we give as a proof that he was manifested in the flesh? Read the rest, and then come and hear our Minister, and you shall find them all untolded one time or other in a plain and ample manner.

N. C. These methinks are no such great Mysteries.

C. No? sure you know not the meaning of the word *Mystery*, but live only upon phrases. Was not this a Secret kept in the breast of God from ages and generations?

N. C. Yes.

C. Then it is a Mystery, and the chief and first of all That God hath sent his Son into the World. As for the

end

ends of his sending him; if those be they you call Mysteries, they are as much declared among us, as among you; and perhaps a great deal more.

N. C. What do you mean?

C. I mean, his dying for our Sins, and rising again for our Justification, and Intercession on our behalf at God's right hand. I dare say these are as well opened to us, as ever they have been to you.

N. C. I am glad to hear it: for I always thought there was little but Legal Preaching among you.

C. You mean, we are taught to obey the Commands of *Christ*.

N. C. No: the Doctrine of *Good works* is always sounding from your Pulpits.

C. These are the same thing: for no other Works are taught us, but such as *Christ* enjoyns. As for the Works of *Moses* his Law, we never hear of them, but only that they do no longer oblige us. If we did, I assure you we should call our Preachers Legal as much as you can do.

N. C. But I am afraid the insisting so much upon Good works, is Legal.

C. You should rather fear that the Preaching of them so little, leads men to Libertinism.

N. C. We are tender lest the Grace of God should be impeached, by putting men so much upon Doing.

C. Then, it seems, you think it peculiar to the Spirit of the Law, to be very sollicitous about Doing well.

N. C. Yes.

C. Now I see you are in very gross darkness. For certainly both the Law and the Gospel put men upon doing, but not the same things, not with the same disposition.

N. C. Explain your self, for methinks you are in the dark.

C. The Gospel gives us better rules of life, and gives us power to do according to them with a more willing

ling and chearful mind, than the Law did.

N. C. Where then is grace all this while?

C. It was the Grace of God that gave us the Gospel; and it is his Grace that accepts of our repentance and obedience after we have offended him; which pardons also, and passes by our failings and imperfections, when we sincerely design and study to obey him in all things.

N. C. You do not think then that you can deserve any thing of him.

C. No: how should we, seeing we are his Creatures, and owe him all the Service we can do him? Which makes us believe, that if we had been born in innocence, and continued so till this time, we could have merited nothing; much less can we pretend to it, now that we are Sinners.

N. C. But you think Good works are necessary to our Justification.

C. Who ever doubted of it that understood himself?

N. C. That doth many a Godly Divine; whom I have heard say, that they are not requisite to our *Justification*, but only to our *Salvation*.

C. I am loth to say, that those Godly Divines did not mind what they said, because I ought in modesty to suspect my own Understanding, rather than theirs: But to me it seems a strange thing, that they should not observe *Salvation* to be nothing else but our final and absolute *justification* at the day of Judgment. And then I am sure our Saviour saith he will examine what men have done; and according as he finds it good or bad, pronounce the sentence of Absolution or Condemnation. Read the 25. of S. *Matthew*, from the 31. verse to the end.

N. C. What do you conclude from thence?

C. What? that if good works be necessary to our Justification then when we come before the Judge; they are necessary now to the beginning of our Justification,

or

or (if you would have me speak other words) to enter us into the state of Justified persons.

N. C. How can that be, since we are justified by Faith only?

C. Very well. For it is not an idle ineffectual Faith which justifies us; but that which *works by love* to our Saviour: and love is the keeping of his Commandments.

N. C. I see one shall not want rational discourse at your Church (as you call it:) but methinks I never found that life and power in your Ministry which I have in ours.

C. I told you before, that I find nothing so powerful as the Christian Doctrine rationally handled. And if the Faith of *Christ* be not so preached as I now told you, for my part I feel no force in the loudest words that I hear; but am apt to say as the man did when he shear'd his Hogs, *Here is a great deal of noise, and little wool.*

N. C. My meaning was, That ours move my affections very much, and yours stir them not at all.

C. I have been taught, that there are two ways to come at the *Affections*: One by the Senses and Imagination; and so we see people mightily affected with a Puppet-play, with a Beggar's tone, with a lamentable Look, or any thing of like nature. The other is, by the Reason and Judgment; when the evidence of any Truth convincing the Mind, engages the affections to its side, and makes them move according to its direction. Now, I believe your Affections are moved in the first way very often; by melting Tones, pretty Similitudes, riming Sentences, kind and loving Smiles, and sometimes dismally sad Looks; besides several Actions or Gestures which are very taking. And the truth is, you are like to be moved very seldom in our Churches by these means. For the better sort of Hearers are now out of love with these things: nor do they think there is any power either in a

puling and whining, or in a roaring and tearing voice. But if you can be moved by such strength of reason, as can conquer the Judgment, and so pass to demand submission from the Affection; you may find power enough (I think) in our Pulpits. And let me tell you, the Passions thus excited differ as much from the other, as the motions of a Man do from them of a Beast, if not more. For one may be affected, whether he will or no by Objects of Sense: but Reason convinces and moves us by sober consideration, and laying things seriously to heart. And I wish heartily you would examine whether the cause why you was no more affected with our preaching, was not this, That you took no pains with your self; *i. e.* you would not be a Man, but was contented to be moved in Religion like a meer Puppet, whose motions depend upon the power of other Agents, and not its own.

N. C. You need not have made so long a discourse in this business; for when you have said as much as you are able, I can answer all in a few words: Assuring you that I am moved with *the things* they say, for I think they are the most *soul-searching* Preachers in the world.

C. It is an hard matter to understand your Phrases. If you mean such Preachers, whose Doctrine touches the Conscience, letting men see their duty and their sins plainly; I think none are to be preferr'd before ours.

N. C. Pray, Sir, consider what you say.

C. What I have said, I say again. And I must add, that I have cause to believe some of you have left our Congregation because the good man's Doctrine searched into you too far, and came too near the quick.

N. C. I understand you not.

C. Have you never heard any man say, that he would come no more to Church, because his Minister ript up his sins of Disobedience to Governors, Faction, Rebellion, Reviling Superiors, rash Censuring and judging their actions,

actions, immodest and malapert disputing with Spiritual Instructors, Medling with other mens matters, Gadding from house to house, to hear or tell news, if not to talk against the Court and Church, with other such like things that are too common, but not commonly reproved?

N. C. Yes, I cannot deny it.

C. Then no doubt he search'd to the bottom of that man's heart; who finding himself wounded, instead of seeking for a Cure, kick'd at him that shot the arrow, and flung dirt in his face; calling him Railer and Reviler, when he only told him the plain truth.

N. C. You are angry.

C. No truly, I am only desirous you should understand things nakedly, as they are in themselves.

N. C. Do you think that our Ministers do not inform their Auditors of the danger of these sins?

C. If they did, I believe they would have fewer come to hear them.

N. C. You are uncharitable.

C. No such matter. I know many of those that flock to them are not able to bear such Doctrine. But they call those plain and searching Preachers, that stir up other mens faults, and that discover to them some kind of sins, which they have heard the Godly most bewail and complain of: for instance, Deadness of heart in duty. Spiritual pride, and unprofitableness under Ordinances, though so powerfully administred.

N. C. Well; and are not these home-truths?

C. But I doubt many of those you call Godly are troubled with other diseases, which had need be look't narrowly after. And besides, methinks your Ministers do too plainly commend themselves, when they tell you what powerful Ordinances you live under, and how you are fed with a feast of Fat things, whilst other poor Souls are even starv'd in other Congregations; meaning such as yours.

N. C. You

N. C. You might as well say that they commend us, when they caution us so much against Spiritual pride.

C. You are in the right. It doth too palpably suppose you to be endowed with great gifts, and so is apt to put you into a high conceit of your selves, notwithstanding all their caution against it. And therefore my opinion is, that they had better teach you all your duty, and then finding how short you are of Perfection, that will be a more effectual means to keep you humble, than all their Declamations against Spiritual Pride.

N. C. They do tell us our duty. And I assure you some preach even against those sins which you say we do not love to hear of.

C. I'le take your word for it. But they are rare men, and they do it rarely. I could tell you also of one, that doing thus, was forbid by his Auditors to proceed, if he intended to have their company.

N. C. Methinks you should not suspect any of them to be guilty of negligence in these matters: Do you not take them for conscientious and good men?

C. Yes truly, I think there are many good men amongst them. But, to deal plainly with you, I look upon most of them as very imperfect and in a lower form of goodness.

N. C. Strange! What reason have you for this?

C. They do not govern their Passions, nor reverence their Governors nor Elders, nor fear to make a Schism in the Church, being furiously bent to follow their own fancies, impatient of Contradiction, conceited of their own Gifts, too ready to comply with the Peoples follies, and to humour them with new and affected phrases: nay, to gratifie their rudeness with most unsavory, clownish and undecent expressions, not only in their preaching, but in their Prayers. And especially they seem to me to have little & narrow spirits, wanting that great Charity

which

which our Saviour commends, and confining Godliness to a small Sect and Party.

N.C. O Sir, how much are you out of the way! If they were not the best men in the world, they could never come so close to us in their Preaching, and search the very heart as we find they do.

C. Now that you repeat this again, you force me to tell you that, which otherwise I would have concealed.

N.C. What's that.

C. That if we may judge of the Sermons you hear by those we see in Print; I think many of them are so far from reaching into the Conscience, that they rather dally and play with mens childish phancies.

N.C. Are you in good earnest?

C. Why should you make a doubt of it? You know I do not use to jest.

N.C. I do not believe you can give me one instance of any such thing.

C. Yes but I can, and more than one. What do you think of the Doctrine of *Repentance*? Is there any thing deserves to be more gravely handled? or can one ever expect to be pierc'd and wounded by that Preacher, who treating of that argument doth not touch the Soul in a lively manner?

N.C. I acknowledge it is a most weighty Doctrine: but what then?

C. Why I tell you I never met with any Treatise (in so serious a subject) more light and toying, than a Book which came lately out of the Press, called *The Doctrine of Repentance, useful for these times*, by *T. W.*

N.C. You are prejudiced.

C. I doubt you are; and yet I believe I shall make you of my mind. Look you; here is the book, which one lent me. What think you of the very beginning of the Epistle to the Reader? *Faith and*

Repen-

Repentance are the two wings by which we fly to Heaven. Doth not this look like a School-boys phrase, which he applies to every Subject? For at another time *T. W.* would tell you, *That Prayer and Meditation are the two wings whereby we fly to Heaven.* Now as for Repentance, he tells you presently it is a *Purgative*, and bids you *not fear the working of this Pill. That must tears dry up the rhumes of sin, and quench the wrath of God.*

N. C. Let the Epistle alone, and go into the body of the Book: there you will find it more powerful.

C. Truly I have not read it over; but I opened it in several places, and I met only with a jingle there, where I expected a clap of thunder.

N. C. That's because you had not a fancy to it.

C. I assure you I brought an indifferent mind to it, being glad if good things be said by any body. But I could not but be disgusted when I read this, *pag.* 16. *That holy Sorrow is the Rhubarb to purge out the ill humours of the Soul, &c.*

N. C. You take little bits, and mind not his continued discourse.

C. Read then what he saith of an Hypocrite, p. 89, 90. and you will think you are reading one of *Blunt's Charallers*, if you ever saw that Book. I expected to have found him cut up and anatomiz'd; whereas in truth he doth but stroke him, and play with him. For thus he says; *The Hypocrite is a Saint in jest; he makes a Majestick shew, like an Ape cloathed in Ermine or Purple. The Hypocrite is like an house with a beautiful Frontispiece, but every Room within is dark: he is a rotten Post fairly gilded. Under his mask of Profession he hides his Plague-sores. The Hypocrite is against painting of Faces, but he paints Holiness: he is seemingly good, that he may be really bad. In Samuel's Mantle he plays the Devil; therefore the same word in the Original signifies* to use Hypocrisy, *and* to be pro-

prophane. But at this present we will let the rest alone, and only observe how he concludes what he says of him: *Hypocrites are far gone with the Rot, and if any thing will cure them, it must be feeding upon the salt Marshes of Repentance.*

N. C. Why do you look me so in the face?

C. To see if you did not smile as sure you would do, were you not angry with me for laying open this Childishness. Nay, do not frown. I appeal to your Conscience, Whether you feel any more force in such words as these, than in a Feather, blown with a great blast against your face, or in a Straw thrust with a strong arm against your Breast.

N. C. I cannot commend them; but you ought not to examine Books (writ with a good intention) so severely.

C. I am far from that humour, and have only exercised a little of that liberty which he gives us in the second page of his Epistle; where he tells us, *He thought to have smothered these meditations in his Desk, but conceiving them of great concern at this time, he rescinded that first resolution, and exposed them to a critical view.* Now if I had a mind to play the Critick, as simple as you think me, I could shew you that he ought to have exposed them only to the view of his very good Friends, and not to Criticks.

N. C. That was only a careless word.

C. Being one of his friends, I am willing to believe so; else I should have thought it an affectation of a fine expression.

N. C. I wish you had never seen the Book.

C. So do I wish too, provided no body else had seen it. But pray be not troubled, nor interpret this as any disrespect to him; for I should not have given notice of any of these things to you, but that you would needs make Comparisons, which are always odious. And you may make a good use of this freedom which I takes for I

perſwade my ſelf, if you would but compare ſome of our Books, which you deſpiſe, with this now mention'd, you would find there is as much difference between the jingling and rimeing of this and their ſolid ſenſe, as between the noiſe of a Jews-trump, or Bag-pipe, and the grave ſound of an Organ.

N. C. But have not you men that quibble, and hunt after little Sentences and fine Words, like him whom you condemn?

C. I had no intention to deny that; but only to ſhew that there is trifling every where. And therefore that you ought not to be ſo partially affected to all your own, and ſo unequal to all ours.

N. C. What's one to ſo many, as are among you, whoſe Books alſo are licenſed to paſs the Preſs?

C. To anſwer the laſt in the firſt place: I can tell you upon my own knowledge, that ſuch ſimple Books have been rejected: and if any of them have chanced to paſs, you ſhall ſeldom find the Preface of ſome other grave Divine, much leſs of three or four Divines of note, ſet before in commendation of it.

N. C. Why! no more hath that, you have been ſpeaking of.

C. True; but no doubt he might have had thoſe Ornaments, if he had pleaſed: For I have ſeen many pitiful Books that have had great Commendations prefixed. And as the Dunghil-Cocks have the largeſt Combs; ſo commonly the meaneſt Books are ſet off with the largeſt Praiſes.

N. C. I perceive you ſtill perſiſt in your confidence, that you know more Books of this nature.

C. Yes: But I do not delight to mutter up all the folly that is in Print; and therefore ſhall only take notice of one Book more, writ in another way; and (if you pleaſe) try whether it deſerve the Commendation which the preface beſtows upon it. *N. C.* What

N. C. What Book is that?

C. It is called *Christ and the Covenant, &c. in ten Sermons*, by *W. B.* which pretends to be full of Mysteries, and, as we are told in the Epistle to the Reader, gives us the very marrow and quintessence of the Gospel. Upon which account he exhorts us to buy it, and makes us believe it is worth any money.

N. C. And you bought it.

C. No, I did not think it worth any thing, when I had once perused a little of it.

N. C. What part did you peruse?

C. I thought that the Marrow I was told of might be found (if any where) in that Discourse which he calls the *Way and Spirit of the New Testament.* But as far as I examin'd it, I met with nothing but a great many bones to pick, and they had little or nothing on them.

N. C. Pray forbear this merriment, and let us seriously consider what he saith.

C. That's my desire. And for your satisfaction read that part where he tells us, what the way of the Old Testament was, and what the way of the New is. I believe I shall convince you, that he is not only out of the true way, but also describes his own way after a poor and wretched manner.

N. C. Be not so earnest.

C. He tells us in the first place, *That the Old Testament Legal spirit serves God upon the account of Rewards mostly, or chiefly, or only:* But the New Testament spirit doth not. Whereas there is nothing plainer, than that Rewards are propounded in both Covenants to encourage our duty. And the Gospel urges us so frequently with the consideration of the rewards it promises, that I question not but he that hath them always in his mind, and serves our Lord *Christ* out of those hopes, as his chief motive, pleases him very well. For the true difference between the Covenants

nants is not, that the one sets rewards before men, and the other not; but, that the old Covenant made with the *Jews* propounded Temporal Rewards, and the Gospel propounds Eternal; which are as often repeated in the Gospel as the other in the Law. And therefore he hath discovered a New-nothing, when he saith, *that to serve God for Rewards mostly, &c. is plainly Legal.* Nay, it is absolutely false. For if a man be moved (as I said) only by hopes of unseen things in another world to obey God, and quit things present for his sake; no doubt he serves him in an Evangelical manner.

N. C. Good Neighbour, be not so confident.

C. Why should I not have some degree of confidence about these things, seeing I am master of common Reason, and I have consulted also with several of our Ministers about them, who have made it plain to me, that the Gospel propounds eternal Rewards in the Life to come, as the great motive to well-doing? The most that any sober man ever said (as far as I can learn) in this argument is, that he who doth well only in sight of those rewards is in a weak estate; but they always allowed him to be indued with an Evangelical Spirit.

N. C. Then it seems you *live upon your own purse, and upon what you can earn of God*; Which he tells you is contrary to a Gospel spirit.

C. It is so. But that is an impertinent Conclusion from his former discourse. For a man may serve God upon the account of Reward, and yet not be so foolish as to imagine he can earn any thing of him.

N. C. Indeed you speak too confidently.

C. I am not of that mind. For I may judge what is consequently spoken as well as another man. And I am sure that Conclusion is nothing to the purpose: only he imagin'd this to be a pretty saying, *That a man of a Gospel spirit knows he lives upon a better purse, than all his own earnings can amount unto.* N. C. I

N. C. I wish you would be more temperate.

C. Who can endure to see men bear up themselves so highly, and hear them cry'd up, as if they were full of the Spirit, when as there is scarce common sense in them, and not be a little concern'd?

N. C. Well, suppose there be one flaw in that Discourse, must that make all this ado?

C. One flaw? Read the rest, and you will find that it is no wiser. For he would have us immediatly after to receive this as another note of a Legal spirit, that it is a *fearing spirit*, put on rather by the threatnings, than the Promises; & the Gospel spirit rather by Promises than threatnings.

N. C. And is not this true?

C. No. For our Saviour bids his Disciples again and again to *fear*; (*Luk.* 12. 4, 5.) not indeed such things as the *Mosaical* spirit did, Temporal Calamities upon their Bodies, goods, &c. but Eternal Miseries, which they should avoid, though wth the enduring of all the hardships in the world. And whereas he says, that *the difference between the Dispensations is, that the one is terrible, the other comfortable*; it is manifestly false. For the Gospel speaks a great deal more terribly, than the Law doth, to Hypocrites & Unbelievers.

N. C. Therefore he tells you afterward, that *a gracious Soul may be full of fears about its condition.*

C. This is nothing to his business. For he was not speaking concerning the fears, which a Soul hath about its estate; but of the Principle upon which a man doth his duty. And, if I understand any thing, a Christian is moved by *fear*, as well as *hope*.

N. C. Well, he acknowledges so much when he saith a gracious heart may be full of fears.

C. I tell you again this is impertinent; for these are not motives to his Duty, but rather hindrances and impediments, as he will tell you. And besides he makes them to be causeless fears; for, he saith,

they are the fears of *a man that ſtands upon a rock*; and therefore he ought not to be troubled with them. Whereas the Scripture requires us to *fear*, (Heb. 4. 1.) (and tells us there is cauſe for it) *leſt a promiſe being left us of entring into reſt, any of us ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it*: and *to work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling*: and *to have grace to ſerve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*. Mind this laſt place, and tell me if it do not directly oppoſe what he ſaith. He perſwades you that a fearing ſpirit is a Legal ſpirit; and the Apoſtle tells you it is an effect of the Goſpel grace, and ſuch a thing whereby we *acceptably* ſerve God.

N. C. You have ſtudied this, I perceive: and I have not. But what ſay you to the *third*, which is this, *A Legal ſpirit meaſures the love of God by outward things.*

C. I ſay it is the beſt thing he ſays; and he was to blame, that he paſſed it over ſo ſlightly and haſtily, as if it were not worth his notice.

N. C. Is not the *fourth* as remarkable, viz. *That an Old Teſtament Spirit trades much, or moſt, or altogether, with conditional Promiſes*; the other not?

C. It is indeed very remarkable: *Firſt*, for the paltry phraſe of *trading in promiſes*; and *Secondly*, for the pernicious conſequence of the Doctrine.

N. C. Why? Is not the Doctrine true?

C. No, For though there was an abſolute promiſe of ſending *Chriſt*, yet there are no abſolute Promiſes which *Chriſt* makes to us.

N. C. He ſeems to grant as much.

C. That is, he contradicts himſelf.

N. C. No; he ſaith, *though the Promiſe be Conditional, yet the Lord hath promiſed that Condition elſewhere, and that without a Condition.*

C. Then it is not Conditional; for what is without a Condition is abſolute.

N. C. Yo

N. C. You would mak him speak Non-sense.

C. Do you try at leisure if you can make good Sense of his words, which methinks are not much better, than if he had said, The Promises are Conditional, but without any Condition.

N. C. Phy, Sir! they are thus to be taken: The Promise is upon a Condition; only that Condition is promised without a Condition.

C. Now you have mended the matter finely; and made it plain, that he thinks all the Promises are absolute. Which how well it agrees wth their being Conditional, I pray tell me, when you have thought of it, at our next meeting.

N. C. Do not you grant then that God promises the Condition (upon performance of which we shall enjoy the Promise) without a Condition?

C. No indeed; for it is certainly false. He promises (for instance) Eternal life if we repent and effectually believe, and not otherwise. Repentance therefore and Faith are the Conditions of that Promise. And I affirm that God no where promises that any of us (do we what we will) shall repent and believe. But he requires us to consider and lay to heart what is spoken to us by his Son *Jesus*; which is as much as to say, that upon this Condition he will work Repentance and Faith in us.

N. C. He doth so. *But though the Promise runs conditionally, yet* he tells us, *it shall be fulfilled absolutely.*

C. You mean, *W. B.* tells us so; and therein confesses he did not speak truly before, when he said the Promise was without a Condition; for now he acknowledges that it runs conditionally. And to say it shal be fulfilled absolutely, is to say, that it seems to be Conditional, but is not.

N. C. Well; methinks there is much of Mystery in what he delivers.

C. That is, you do not understand it, but it sounds prettily, and so you like it. And so I believe you do the next,

(for the same reason) wherein he tells you, that *in the Old Testament they came to* Christ *by the Promise, but now we come to the Promise by* Christ.

N. C. I like it, because it seems to carry a great mystery in it.

C. It may seem so, but it doth not.

N. C. No? what do you make of it?

C. I think it rather carries a plain falsity in it. For we come to *Christ* by the Promise as well as they; and they went to the Promise by *Christ*, as well as we.

N. C. I know not what you mean.

C. That's because you know not what he means. But if you will understand me, thus it is. There was a Promise that God would send *Christ* into the world; and the fulfilling of this Promise is one great reason why we believe in *Jesus*; and so we are led (you see) to him by the Promise. On the other side, there were Promises of great things that *Christ* would do for those that believed on him; and those then that did believe the *Messiah* would come, hoped for the enjoyment of these Promises by his means; and so (if I may speak in his phrase) they went first to *Christ*, and then to the Promise.

N. C. I do not well apprehend you; and therefore think it's time to lay aside this Book.

C. You do discreetly. For if you had continued your discourse about it, I should have discovered a world of Follies to you.

N. C. The things of God are foolishness to the natural man.

C. These are not the *things of God*, nor the *things of a man* neither; but childish Fancies, or as we commonly speak, *New-no things*.

N. C. I know they appear so to the natural man.

N. I do not judge according to meer Nature, but by the direction of the Spirit which instructed the Apostles, and

and therefore you apply that Scripture foolishly to me.

N. C. You use your reason too much.

C. You have some reason to say so, for if I had used it less, these things had not appeared so ridiculous.

N. C. By that time your *heart hath lain so long a-soke in the blood of* Jesus *as his* hath done, we shall hear other language from you.

C. You are taken, I perceive, with that new phrase in the Epistle to the Reader, and only because it is new: else it would seem very irreverent, being taken from a Toast in a Pot of Ale, or a Sop in a Dripping-pan; a great deal more fit for a Preface before a Book of one of those you call *Old Sokers*, than of such a Reverend Author.

N. C. You are merry, Sir.

C. Truly, I do not make my self merry with any mens Sins: but at their little foolish Affectations, how can one chuse but smile? But why could he not as well have said, that he had a long time thought of the efficacy and virtue of the Bloud of *Christ*; or, that he was much acquainted with the love of *Christ* in dying for us? But to say that he had *lain long a-soke* in his bloud, is as absurd as if he had told us that he had *lain long beaking himself* in the Beams of the Sun of Righteousness; or roasting himself before the fire of the Divine love.

N. C. Pray, Neighbour, forbear these expressions.

C. I was only going to shew you that we have as good a faculty as you, to coyn new Words & Phrases if we would take the liberty. But I will forbear, if you will but be content upon this occasion to look back with me, and consider how all the Nation comes to be overrun with folly.

N. C. How, I pray you?

C. As soon as you had cast out of doors all that was Old among us; if any Fellow did but light upon some new and pretty Fancy in Religion, or some odd unusual Expression, or perhaps some swelling words of

Vanity, presently he set up for a Preacher, and cryed up himself for a man that had made some newdiscovery. And such was the confidence of these men, both in inventing strange Language, & proclaiming their great Discoveries every where, that the poor people were perswaded, the Nation never knew what Communion with God meant till this time. Now they thought the happy days were come when the Spirit was poured out, the Mysteries of the Gospel unfolded, Free grace held forth, the anointings and Sealings of the Spirit vouchsafed, *Christ* advanced to his Throne; and when they should have such Incomes, indwellings, and I know not how many other fine things, as never was the like heard of before. For one man comes and tells them of the *streamings of* Christ's *Blood freely* to sinners: another bids them *put themselves upon the stream of Free grace*, without having any foot on their own bottom: A third tells them how they must *apply Promises*, absolute Promises. A fourth tells them there is a special Mystery in looking at the *Testamentalness of* Christs *Sufferings*. And because he found that every body had got into their mouths *Gospel Truths*, *hidden Treasures*, and such like words; he presented them with *Sips of Sweetness*, and told them he was to come to shew them how the *Saints might pry into the Father's Glory*; and in short, bid them not be afraid of *New Light*, but *set open their windows for any Light that God should make known to them.*

N. C. Sure, no body used such Expressions as these.

C. This last is to be found in that very Author you have laid out of your hands, *pag.* 47. who also puts the people into a fancy, that they have *Revelation and Visions in these days.*

N. C. Certainly you do him wrong.

C. You shall be Judge of that, when you have read the beginning of the next page. There he tells you that there are four times wherein you should think much on

Christ

Christ crucified, And the first is this, *In case of some Revelation or Vision that you may be under.* Which he repeats again in the following page. *It is a good thing,* saith he, *to think of* Christ *crucified at all times, but when you have Revelations and Visions,* &c. *then it is a good time.* From whence I conclude, that as he bids you *open your windows for new Lights to come in,* so, when he thinks on't, he will call upon you, as the Beadle doth in the Streets, *Hang out your Lights, Hang out your new Lights.*

N. C. Pray be not so abusive.

C. There is no abuse at all in this. For the same reason that made him step at first out of the common way of speaking, may make him use such an expression as this, if he light on it. It being also a thing peculiar to such men to please the people with some new-found Words and Phrases; which if they should lay aside, together with all their abused Scripture expression, they would look just like other men, only not so well.

N. C. You may say your pleasure.

C. I thank you. And pray look back again, and consider what followed all these *glorious Discoveries*, as they called them. Since the people were so much in love with new-minted Words, in which they thought there were great Mysteries concealed; those men who would excel all the rest of these new Teachers set forth themselves in more pompous Language, and made a shew of a more glorious Appearance of God in them. For they told the people of being *Godded with God, and Christed with Christ*, &c. which strangely amused silly Souls, and made them gaze and stare, as if the Holy Ghost were come down again from Heaven upon men.

N. C. Our Ministers are not of this strain.

C. But they first began this affectation of new phrases, and no wonder if their Schollars endeavoured to outdo them.

N. C. They are none of their Schollars.

C. Sure they all came out of their School. For they taught men first to despise sober and plain Doctrine, which teaches them their Duty toward God and their Neighbor, entertaining them with finer Speculations of pretended Gospel-Mysteries & Manifestations; with which we heard almost every Sermon stuffed: so that he was thought no body that had not good store of them. Now as those you admire found they could win no great number of Proselytes, unless they left the old track of Preaching Sobriety, Justice, Charity and Godliness: so their Schollars found in a little time, that the new Notions & Language of their Masters were grown stale; and that unless they invented newer, at least coined some other Phrases, their Reputation would be but small. And thus it came to pass, that every one, striving not so much to speak what would profit, as what would please, dressed up Religion in affected Language of his own making; and new Expressions, if not new Notions, were heaped one upon another every year; till none knew what Christianity was. For at last there arose a Company of fine Youths, who judged even their Masters to be in a low and dull Form of Religion, *sticking in the beggarly Elements*, and *the dead letter*, and the *Old-Testament spirit*, as their manner of speaking was. These imagine that not only we, but you, know *Jesus* only in the *Flesh*, and stand in the *outward Court*, and are not yet come within the *Veil* to discern the *Spirit* & the *Mystery*, which they alone bring to light. Such a progress doth Fancy make, when once it is let loose, and men are taught not to *reason*, but to *believe*, there is no end of its Follies; and God only knows when this Nation, which is overflowed with them, and is made fond of them, will be reduced to a more sober mind.

N. C. We bewail it as well as you.

C. I am glad of it. But I wish you would bewail the *Original*

ginal sin of all (as W. B. advises you in another case, I doubt with no good meaning, pag. 473.) which will be found in your selves; from whence a great number of other Mischiefs have flowed, and made the same progress with that now named. For you first taught the people to forbear all expression of Devotion when they came into the Church, and decried the reverence of uncovering the Head there as Superstitious and abominable. And so they soon took the liberty to come talking into the Church, & not only to walk with their Hats on to their Seats (even when the Minister was reading the Holy Scriptures) but keep them half on when he was at Prayer. And then, because others were wont to kneel, or at least Stand, in that holy Duty; they would shew their Liberty, or their Opposition (I know not whether) in Sitting, nay in Lolling after a lazy fashion, as if the Minister were telling a sleepy Tale, not praying to our Creator. In short, there were no bounds could be set to their Extravagancies; but they found out as many new Gestures, and odd phrantick Expressions, in their Prayers, as before they had done in their Preaching.

N. C. For all this you shall never make me believe but that they are the only *Spiritual Preachers*.

C. This you told me before; and I am of your mind, if you call that Spiritual Doctrine which is airy, thin, and so refined that no body can feel and touch it, no not with his most serious thoughts.

N. C. Yes. I can feel it to be very Spiritual?

C. It is an hard matter to understand your Language. Do all our Preachers only tell us *carnal* things?

N. C. That is not my meaniug.

C. What then?

N. C. I call it *Spiritual*, to distinguish it from *Moral* Teaching.

C. As much as to say, our Ministers teach men their Duty, and yours do not: or else, that yours teach them only

only such Duties as may be done in their Spirits between God and themselves, but not such as are expressed in Life and Manners, in our bodily actions, which tend to the good of our Neighbours, and the Happiness of the world.

N. C. I understand you not.

C. Your Sermons are chiefly about prayer, and meditation, and Communion with God, and Believing.—

N. C. Yes, Believing: Now you have hit my meaning.

C. But I was going to add something to that word, *viz. Believing, without Doing.* Else you will not count it spiritual Preaching.

N. C. Not if they should insist much upon *Doing.* For there are more *Spiritual matters* for Believers to be instructed in.

C. That is things revealed to us by the *Spirit* sent down upon the Apostles.

N. C. I know not what to say to your explication; for I never heard it before. But pray proceed.

C. I know no spiritual things but those which concern the glory of our Saviour in the heavens, his power at Gods right hand, his Intercession there for us, his coming again to Judgment, and such like; which are proved to be true; not by humane Reason, but by the Spirit descending from heaven on the Apostles.

N. C. Well, and are not these great things?

C. And do not our Ministers treat of them as well as yours?

N. C. But not in a *spiritual way.* Ours treat of *spiritual* things *spiritually.*

C. I guess what you mean, They treat of these things in such a manner, as not to bring them down to meddle with our Lives, or not much and chiefly, as *W. B.* speaks. Or thus, they draw matter of Comfort from them, but little or nothing of Duty.

N. C. I

N. C. I know not how to express it. But I alway find that they handle these things in a sweeter manner than other men.

C. I believe you. For nothing is so sweet and pleasing to flesh and bloud, as for a man to hear how much a great Prince is in love with him, and how freely he loves him; how his heart beats in Heaven toward him; and especially how careful and compassionate he is toward him in a persecuted condition.

N. C. And is not this very Spiritual Doctrine?

C. Yes. But setting aside all fancy; nothing is more solidly open'd by our Divines, than the power of our Saviour, and his great love toward his faithful and obedient Disciples.

N. C. You must needs still bring in *Obedience.*

C. I have been taught to do so. For this great Lord always *loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: and therefore God hath anointed him with the oyl of gladness above his fellows*; *i. e.* given him such a Royal Power in the Heavens, (*Heb.* 1. 9.) Unto which glory we cannot be promoted but by the same way of Righteousness. And let me tell you, I think I have heard it clearly demonstrated, that though there is infinite comfort and satisfaction in believing that our Lord *Jesus* is so exalted, and hath made us such promises, which he is able to make good; yet all this is but to incourage our Obedience, and to make us constant and firm in the Christian Religion, notwithstanding all the Difficulties and Troubles we meet with all for *Christ*'s sake. So that in truth these are the most *Spiritual Preachers*, that is, the best Interpreters of the mind of the Spirit, who urge and press men, from the consideration of what God hath revealed to us in these matters, to be *stedfast and unmoveable, and abundant in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

N. C. Doth

N. C. Doth not *Christ* himself say that the *Work of God is believing?* (*John* 6. 29.)

C. Yes, but not such a believing as yours, which is only a relying on *Christ* for the forgiveness of your Sins.

N. C. What was it then?

C. An effectual perswasion that God hath sent *Jesus* into the world, as he there tells you, *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.* And if you can think he means a bare perswasion of this, that God sent him, without the effects and fruits of it, which is the becoming his Disciples sincere profession of his Religion, and living according to it; then the Devil may be a good Believer, a very Spiritual person and great Saint, for he very early acknowledged Him to be the Son of God. And we read that *the Devils believe and tremble.*

N. C. Alas! this is a poor Faith, which cannot apply the Promise.

C. That's because it is not made to them. For if it were, and they had but a good fancy, they might apply it (in your way) as well as any body else, and yet remain Devils still.

N. C. Now you go beyond all the bounds of Reason.

C. Because I follow you, whose Doctrine leads to this.

N. C. How doth that appear?

C. I cast my eye casually upon one place in the Book newly nam'd, and there I found this Mystery; *That though there is a Condition in the new Covenant, yet no Condition to be perform'd by us, but by* Christ *our second* Adam: *pag.* 69. And though he confesses something must be performed by us, yet he saith, it is all promised to us, and that without Condition. And therefore a little after he makes this a mark of those that are in Covenant, *to be begot again by a Promise, especially the absolute Promise*: *pag.* 72. Now since no Condition is to be performed by us, why should any person take any care about it? or why should

should any one trouble himself about doing that, which is already done for him, or, if it be not done, is promised that it shall be done? especially since his great work is (as you say) only to close with the promise, to lay hold upon the absolute promise? For no body being named particularly in the promise, nor any qualification supposed in any man whereby he may know that he is capable of the blessing rather than another; no reason can be given why all should not apply it to themselves, though never so bad; nay, why they ought not to apply it.

N. C. No, that is too great a boldness; they must be humbled and cast down ----

C. Then it seems they ought to feel some Qualification in themselves, which incourages them to lay hold on the Promise. Though, if it be absolute, it's more than needs, nay, than is good: for they ought to have no respect to any of those things, but only the Freeness of the Promise. And then I pray why might not a Devil remain so still?

N. C. But such as are within the Covenant will find themselves wrought upon to forsake their sins, &c.

C. Grant that. Yet if they do, it is no Incouragement to them, according to your Doctrine; and therefore if they do not, it ought to be no Discouragement. For they ought not to take any confidence to go to God because of any thing they find in themselves; and therefore they may be confident; though they find nothing in themselves but only a strong fancy that the Promise belongs to their Persons.

N. C. Though they cannot take any confidence because they are so disposed toward God, yet they must be well disposed.

C. Why so? Will he have it so in order to give them Confidence to hope in his Mercy that their sins shall be forgiven?

N. C. No; the promise of that is absolute.

C. Then

C. Then one man may be as confident that hath not those Diſpoſitions as he that hath, believing that it is God's will he ſhall have them when he pleaſes.

N. C. I ſee you underſtand nothing of the Covenant of Grace.

C. Yes, I underſtand that it was the riches of God's Grace, to make a Covenant of ſaving thoſe Sinners who would obediently believe on his Son. For this was more than he was bound to grant: and this Believing and Obedience can deſerve nothing of him (it being a Duty to believe what he reveals, and to do what he enjoyns;) and beſides, he gives us the means of Faith, and Helps to well-doing.

N. C. How can it be Free, if we do any thing for it?

C. I have told you, that we cannot do any thing for to deſerve it; and what we do he enables us to perform it. And therefore it is free; becauſe when we have done all, yet he is no way tied to give us any thing, but only upon the account of his own moſt gracious Promiſe.

N. C. You grant then his Promiſe is from meer Grace.

C. No body doubts of it that I know of. But this Grace is not ſo fond as to make the Promiſe to any one that is confident it belongs to him, even whilſt he remains in a ſtate of Sin. Such a Favour God had to Sinners, as freely, and without any diſpoſition in them, to ſend his Son and his Holy Spirit: but unleſs they become like his Son, they are taught by him not to preſume he will give all the Bleſſings the Goſpel promiſes; for they are made only to the faithful.

N. C. God will make them ſo.

C. But according to your Opinions, that is a thing which they need not conſider, when they apply the Promiſes of Salvation to themſelves. For you ſay, they muſt have

have respect to absolute promises; which you know have nothing to do with any Qualification for this Favour. In pursuance of which Doctrines you perswade your selves, that Assurance of God's Love is not to be grounded upon any Grace wrought in us, but only upon the Testimony of the Spirit, perswading us that our Persons are beloved, and that the Promises are made to us.

N.C. This is *Antinomianism*.

C. May be so, and your Ministers may be *Antinomians*, and yet not know it.

N.C. Call them what you please, I am resolved to follow them: for I think you will allow them to be the most *experimental Preachers*, in the world.

C. Still you pester me with Phrases which I doubt you understand no more than I.

N.C. Is not the word plain enough?

C. It is, if you mean by an *experimental Preacher* a man that hath tried himself those ways which he earnestly beseeches others to walk in: but then it will not serve your purpose, for you cannot deny but we have men that lead as strict and holy lives as any of yours can do.

N.C. I mean, one that preaches his own Experiences in the ways of God.

C. You do not well know what you mean. For this is either the same that I now told you: or else it may signifie no more than one that preaches his own Fancie.

N.C. Now it is hard to know what you mean.

C. I mean, that tells you stories of God's *Withdrawings* and *Desertings*; and again, of his *Shinings* and *Sealings*, &c.

N.C. And do you call these Fancies?

C. Commonly they are no more. For I observe well-meaning people fall into these Melancholick & despairing Fits: and are recovered again into greater Chearfulness

fulness and Assurance, without any reason at all; but only by a fanciful application of some Scripture or other, which belongs not at all to their condition: and yet casts them down, or raises them up.

N. C. You are mistaken; they have Reason.

C. If there be any that can be thought a sufficient ground, of God's withdrawing himself, sure it must be some provoking Sin which they have committed. And yet I see that they who cannot charge themselves with any voluntary act of Sin, nor with any such Omission neither, fall into these fancies (so I must still call them) of being forsaken by God. All the occasion that ever I could find for such black thoughts is, but some such thing as this, that they have not such Inlargments as they were wont; or cannot go to Duty with that delight which formerly they took in it: which your Ministers ought to teach them, are no Reasons, but only melancholick Conceits. And if these be the things you call Experiences, there are none of us but understand them, as well as you, finding the same Dulness and Heaviness in our selves. Only we are taught not to talk or complain of it, but to do our duty notwithstanding as well as we are able, and we shall find it will not last alway.

N. C. You make too light of these things.

C. I hope not. But you lay too great weight upon them, and make these such Marks of a Gracious Soul, that it helps to put good (but weak) people into these Humors; and, I doubt, makes them lay hold on all occasions to fancy themselves deserted.

N. C. Pray speak no more of these matters, for I see you are ignorant in them; as you are in all the great things of God, which are Foolishness to the world. Why do you smile? They are the Apostle's words, (1 Cor. 1. 23.)

C. I know it. But I smile to see how you prove that which you deny, viz. that Fancy governs you.

N. C. How

N. C. How do I prove it?

C. By this application of the Apostle's words according to their Sound, and not their Sense.

N. C. Why what is their Sense, think you?

C. That to a meer Gentile it seemed a foolish thing to believe that a crucified person was made *Christ*, that is Lord and King of the world. The *Jews stumbled* at this, and would not receive him for the *Messiah*, or King of *Israel*, who shamefully hung upon a Cross: and the *Gentile* thought this a ridiculous perswasion, which none but Idiots would receive. But then he tells you what *Gentiles* and *Jews* these were; *viz.* such as were meerly natural, and did not allow the testimony of the Spirit, wherby the Apostles proved this Doctrine. For they who were convinced that the Holy Ghost was in the Apostles; & judged not by mere humane Reason, but heavenly testimonies, made no scruple to believe that this crucified *Jesus* was made Lord of all: and herein they acknowledged the great Power and Wisdom of God to be made apparent.

N.C. You give the oddest interpretations of Scripture that ever were heard of.

C. Every thing seems odd to you which is cross to your Fancy. But examine the Scriptures seriously, and you will find the Interpretations which I have learnt to be plain and even.

N.C. I do read them continually.

C. I believe you; and that you apply every thing, as you fancy it will fit these times.

N.C. I apply it as I see those do, whom (notwithstanding all that you have said) I take to be the most *experimental Preachers*. For *that which they have seen with their eyes, which they have looked on, and which their hands have handled of the word of life, that declare they unto us*, as Saint *John* speaks, 1 Ep. 1. 1. Pray be more serious, and do not laugh while we speak of these things.

C. Well;

C. Well, I will. Bring me one of those men that have done this, and I tell you seriously I will become one of his Disciples.

N.C. I can bring you an hundred that I am acquainted with.

C. Then the story of the *Wandring Jew* is no Fable. Would I could see but one (*one*, I assure you, would suffice me) of these happy men.

N.C. Would I could know what the matter is that makes your fancy wander and rove this Fashion. You have talkt so rationally all this while, that I cannot but admire now to see your wits go a wool-gathering I know not whither.

C. I do not stray one jot from the business. I have heard (as I was going to tell you) of a *Jew*, who being present at our Saviour's Death, and seeing him hang upon the Cross, hath ever since wandred up and down from place to place, and (as the story goes) remains somewhere or other to this very day. I always took it indeed for a Lie, till now that I meet with you, who give me hopes to see an hundred such men, and that in *London*.

N.C. You seem to me to be distracted. I have nothing to do, either with *Jews*, or with *Lies*.

C. A little, my good Neighbour, with *Lies*. For if your men have *seen the Lord of Life with their eyes, and look'd upon him, and handled him*; then they were alive in our Saviours time, as that *Jew* is said to have been. Or else he hath appeared to them since, as he did to St. *Thomas*, saying, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands*; and *reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side*.

N.C. No: there was some other seeing beside that.

C. What? hath *W.B.* or some of his Disciples had a *Vision*, wherein they beheld him and look'd upon him?

N.C. You cannot understand the things of God.

C. Yes,

C. Yes, as well as you; unless you have had some *Revelation*, which he presumes you may enjoy.

N. C. There is seeing and feeling without that.

C. You can tell me of none which we are strangers unto. If you mean, that you discern the truth and certainty of the Christian Faith; I doubt not but our eyes are as good as yours in that point. If you mean that you approve of the Christian life, even from your own sense of the satisfaction and Happiness there is in it: I make no question it is as palpable to us as to you. Or if you would have us think that you have long and seriously meditated upon the Mysteries of the Gospel, so as to be mightily affected with them; I do not believe that we are defective in that neither, but have look'd upon them, as long as your selves, and are as affectionate Admirers of them.

N. C. You are faln, methinks, into a strain of *Boasting.*

C. It is you, that have compelled me, as the *Corinthians* did S. *Paul* by undervaluing him. And if you think me a fool in this (as well as other things) I am in no worse condition than that great Apostle thought he might be: Read his discourse in 2 *Cor.* 11, 16, 17 &c. and give me leave to speak to you a little in his words. You are a wise sort of people, and so can be content now and then to *suffer fools gladly.* For *you suffer if a man bring you into bondage* to certain Opinions of his own, which make it necessary for you to do or not to do that which God hath not tied you unto. *If a man devour you* by living continually upon you; *If he take of you*, Gold, Silver, and other gifts whereby he must be maintained; *If he exalt himself*, pretending perhaps, to more of the Spirit, and a more special Mission from God, than other men have; still you suffer him very patiently. Why then cannot you suffer me only to *boast a little*; especially since it is not of my self, but of our Ministers which I hear?

And those few words of S. *Paul* in that place shall suffice to this purpose; *Are yours the Ministers of Christ?* (I *speak* you will think, *as a fool*) *ours are more.* For they know *Christ Jesus* the Lord, as well as yours: they preach him as sincerely and feelingly: they tread in his steps, and crucifie the flesh with the affections and lusts. And beside, they are more peaceable, more obedient to Governours, more respectful to their Superiors, more modest in their Inquiries and Resolutions about difficult Points, more charitable to those that dissent from them, and more desirous me-thinks to edifie, rather than to humour the people. For they do not seek to please their itching Ears, and gratifie the longings of their fancies with new-found words, affected expressions, and odd Phrases; but tell us those things that concern our Saviour and his holy Life in plain and proper Language. Which, I protest fills me with joy and gladness whensoever I think of it. And it makes me conclude they have much Experience of the things of God, because they make me so feelingly conceive what the pleasure and contentment is of being meek and lowly, sober and chaste, contented and heavenly-minded; and above all things, of having an heart inlarged with great Charity to all men, so as to be ready to forgive, and to do good. This holy disposition, you cannot deny, must needs make them capable to understand the Mind of God revealed to us in his Word; which book I observe they are very careful we should understand aright, and not interpret and apply it, as I see you do, according to our Fancy. For you conceive that, because S. *John* declared what he *saw and handled of the word of Life.* (*i.e.* of our Saviour and his Gospel) to convince some that denied he was come in the Flesh, or gainsay'd their Doctrine; you are able to do the same.

N.C. Well, I see my mistake in that. But say what

you

you will, your Preachers never had such a *Seal to their Ministry* as God hath given ours, by converting thousands through their means.

C. More Phrases still? You mean God hath shewn they are rightly called or sent by him.

N.C. Yes.

C. Then all those men who turn people may say that they have a *Seal of God* to their Ministry. See, say the *Popish* Priests, what multitudes we convert! therefore we are sent of God. Behold; say the *Quakers*, we have a *Seal from Heaven*; for so many of your people have forsaken you; and follow us.

N.C. But you mistake me, Sir; They do not only convert men to our Party, but to be good. They really turn them from sin to God.

C. I am glad to hear it. But may not a question be made, whether they are not converted only from some, not from all Sins; nay, whether they are not converted from one Sin to another? So I am sure you confess it is with the *Quakers*, who make men sometime more civil in one regard, but more uncivil, than ever in others.

N.C. Sure, you cannot suspect us to be like them.

C. It will be fit for you to examine your selvs throughly in this Point; Whether, for instance, many among you are not converted from loving the World, to hate their Neighbours; from cold Devotion at our Churches, to a fiery Zeal against our Ministers; from Undutifulness to Natural Parents, to the greatest contempt of Civil and Spiritual. Nay, is this never made a Note of a man converted, that, though he have a great many Faults yet he is wrought to Antipathy to Bishops, Common-Prayer, an innocent Cassock, and a Surcingle, as you are pleased in derision to call our Ministers Girdles?

N.C. Truly, I think the badness of your Ministers

may have provoked the people to be rude to them; the best of them being no better, than *Time-servers*.

C. We will consider that by and by. Only let me note, that you cannot deny what I suspect you guilty of. And beside, suppose there be a great many converted by your Ministers to true godliness, this is no greater *Seal* (as you call it) than we have, there being many turned from all their evil ways, to a more noble degree of Vertue, than you can commonly shew, by those very men who did then heartily serve God when yours too much served the Time.

N.C. You will say any thing.

C. If you know, what is meant by a *Time-server*, and do not only pelt us with words, I hope to make you confess, what I say.

N.C. Try what you can do.

C. I think we are agreed that a *Time-server* is one who complies with the naughty Humours of the time for his own profit, and meddles not with the reigning sins, for fear of offending his good Masters by whom he is maintained. A thing which it is hard to find any man of note guilty of among us; but which it is notoriously known the most eminent of yours were faulty in, in their time.

N.C. I doubt you will prove your self a false Accuser.

C. Charge me with that, if you can, when I have done. And let me ask you, whether you are not satisfied that the sins of *Sacrilege*, and *Rebellion* or *Disobedience to Governors*, are very heinous; and whether it be not apparent that there was great need, in the begining of the late Times, to warn the Nation to take heed of involving themselvs in that guilt which several considerable persons were running headlong into; I think you will not oppose me in either of these, and I take your silence for Consent. And then I dare appeal to you, whether your Divines

were

were not very meal-mouth'd, as we use to speak, and afraid these words should come within their lips, even then when they saw these Sins come to their full growth. Nay, I affirm that you shal scarce find mention of them in their Writing, much less was any thing heard of them in their Sermons. Which is an evidence to me, that either they had not sound and good Consciences, or that they wanted Courage & contented themselvs to swim along with the Stream. And in the first place, let me tell you something that hath been observed of their unworthy Compliance with the *Sacrilegious* humour of those times. A worthy Minister of my Acquaintance once told me, that your Assembly-men or other Divines, who wrote *larger Annotations upon the Bible*, (of the Edition *An.* 1640) are very guilty in this point. For where there is a fit occasion, said he, to speak against Sacrilege, and where other Expositors are wont to declare the foulness of the Sin, there they say not a word but pass it quite over, as if they knew of no such thing in the world. Though he would not impute it to their ignorance, but to their base Cowardise and flattering disposition, which was loth to displease the Lords of that Time.

N. C. Sure he did them a great deal of wrong.

C. I'le tell you some of the places, he instances in. First, that known place *A.* 5. 3. where he told me in that Edition of 1640. there is no mention made of their Sacrilege, and defrauding God of that which was devoted to him, (though that was their chief Crime) but only of their Hypocrisie, Covetousness, and Lying, I must confess I have not the Book, and therefore you must take his word for it. But thus much I will tell you upon my own knowledge; that having occasion once to look upon their Annotations, (and that of the third Edition, much inlarg'd) upon *Rom.* 2. 22. where there was a fitter occasion to say something of this Sin,

than in the former place, because the very word *Sacrilege* is here mention'd, I observed (I well remember) that these tender-finger'd Gentlemen would not so much as touch it, but fairly slip't over it. For they only speak of the notion of the word in the Civil Law, (and that not directly) defining it, *The taking away from the Emperor any thing that his is.* Would not this make one think that they were very much afraid to meddle with this Sin?

N. C. Perhaps that is the meaning of *Sacrilege*, there.

C. One can scarce believe it, who consults the place; where the Apostle reprehends a man that commits something of the same nature with that, which he reproves another man for. And therefore I doubt not but, those who then cry'd out against Idols, and by no means would indure them in the Holy place, did discover their Profaneness and dis-respect to that place some other way, which in all likelihood was in not bringing their Offerings thither, but detaining from God that which was his own peculiar goods. They that are learned, I doubt not, can give you other reasons.

N. C. But I have heard some say, that things are not holy now, so as they were then; because they were separated by a particular direction and express command of God, which was the thing that made them *holy*.

C. This is one of the most notable things you have said yet, however you came by it. But it will not do your Business. For what will you say, if I shew you that even in their Notes upon the Law of *Moses*, and other places of the Old Testament, they say not a word of this Sin, of turning that to another use which God hath separated by his special command unto his own? no, though there be the fairest invitation, and sometimes great reason, to do it?

N. C. I believe you undertake more than you can do.

C. Thus

C. Thus much I can assure you upon my own knowledge, that consulting upon a time (as any man may have occasion to do) their Notes upon *Levit.* 25.34. where the Fields belonging to the *Levites* are forbidden to be sold; I found that they were perfectly mute, and said not a word of the nature of this Sin amongst the *Jews*: for fear, one would think, that any Christian should thence conclude, that it was unlawful to sell the Bishops Lands, which then their Masters were about.

N. C. The Text is plain enough, if any one had a mind to make that Inference.

C. I, but some Annotations on a plain place make it more observed; and I am sure they are large enough in their Descants upon as plain words as those. And therefore why they should forbear to say any thing there I cannot imagine, unless it were a fear of displeasing the Parliament and many of their partakers. For as for themselves, I believe many of them would not have had the Lands sold, but employed to their use and benefit.

N. C. Well, is this all?

C. No, there is another remarkable place in the Book of *Joshua*, Chap. 6. 19. where God commands all the Gold and Silver, &c. which should be taken in *Jericho*, to be consecrated to him, and put into the Treasury. Notwithstanding which we read that *Achan* purloined 200 shekels of Silver and a wedge of Gold to his own private use, and was therefore severely punished, nay all the Congregation troubled for his offence, till he suffered for it, *Josh.* 7. 1. And yet these men say not a syllable of this Sin in their Notes on either of those verses; though all other Divines are wont from thence to shew how dangerous it was then to rob God, and take away what was separated to his uses. In other places I am sure they oft make large Declamations against some Sins, and in a manner preach against them: and therefore why they should

should not have a syllable to say here about this matter, is a great mystery, unless I have discovered the cause of it. As for that place, *Gen.* 47. 22. I know you will say they were Idolatrous Priests whose Land *Joseph* sold not. But methinks they needed not have made an excuse (as they there do) for *Joseph*'s not selling them, as if it had been an act of greater Virtue, if he had. And methinks they should have told the world pretty smartly, that if *Pharaoh* had such a respect to the *Ægyptian* Priesthood as not to sell their Land; Christian Princes and Governors should not be more unkind (if not unjust) in these days, nor expose to sale those Lands which have been setled upon the Priests of the most High God. But above all, I wonder at their profound silence in their Notes upon *Ezek.* 48. 14. where one would think at last they would have broken it; especially since they might have done it pretty securely in such an obscure place, which few read. There the Lands of the *Levites* are again forbidden to be sold: And by *Levites* according to their own Principles we are to understand the Ministers of the Gospel, whose Lands therefore ought not to be sold. I prove it clearly. Thus, In the beginning of their Explication of this Vision, they lay down this for a Foundation of their Exposition (Chap. 40. 2.) that herein was represented the ample and flourishing estate of *Christ*'s Church, under the Types of the Re-building of the Temple, Restauration of the *Levitical* Worship and Service, and the Repossession and Inhabitation of the whole Land. Which they repeat again Chap. 43. 1. and in sundry other places. If this be true, (as they believed it to be) then, according to their own Rules, the assigning of Land for the *Levites* must signifie the care that ought to be taken to settle a Maintenance for the support of the Gospel Ministery and Service; and the prohibition against selling the *Levites* Lands must denote the pleasure of God, that

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the portion of Land or other things setled upon the Evangelical Priesthood, or Ministery, should never be alienated from them. Now I pray you tell me, why would they not open their mouths at last in so plain a case as this? What should be the cause, that they do not so much as name this Sin, much less bid the World beware of it, and still much less pass any sentence upon it? Do you think they did not know what was wont to be said on these places? Did they not understand well enough, that if they would write consequently to their own Principles before laid down, they must either tax that Sin in this place of *Ezekiel*, or else say just nothing? Why did they chuse the later, and pass it over without a word; but only referring us to two or three places of Scripture nothing to the purpose?

N. C. Truly I know not what to say.

C. I'le tell you then. The most probable conjecture is that which I have made already, That they were afraid in the least to displease their masters who set them on work. The Parliament would have taken it very ill, and all the *good people* too, who, to save their own purses, were content the Churches Lands should be sold to carry on the War which they had illegally begun.

N. C. I hope better, and that you will not now take occasion from the mention you make of the War, to fall into a Declamation against the other Sin of *Rebellion*.

C. Since you love not to hear any thing of it, I am content to be as silent as your Ministers were wont to be: only let me tell you, I have observed several other things which they forbear, not because they think it is their Duty, but for fear of displeasing a party.

N. C. What do you mean?

C. I mean, it was for this reason that they seldom or never (some of them) used the *Lord's Prayer*, because the people had been taught on a sudden to abhor Forms,

Forms, without remembring them that the Lord's prayer was a Form. It was not fit to tell them that, for fear they should have continued to like other Forms of prayer for its sake. I observe also, that still they will by no means give the title of *Saint* to one of the Apostles or Evangelists of our Lord, (though I think they will call them *Holy*, which is the same) no not when they read a Text out of their Writings. For which I can conceive no other reason, but that their good Dames and Masters do not like it. They are afraid that it is Popish. And rather than these *Men-servers* will be at the pains of convincing them of their error, or, to speak more properly, rather than venture the danger of losing them, (for many might in a passion fly off, if they heard the name of *Saint* given to any but themselves) they will not offend their tender ears by naming that abominable word. And were it not that I am loth to tire you, I could instance in a great many other things wherein they are meer Slaves to the humours of the people, and *serve the time*; not daring to say those things, or to use those words which they know are fit to be said and to be used, meerly because many people will run away from them.

N.C. There is no danger of that. Whither should they run?

C. To our Ministers: whom perhaps they forsook upon such little accounts, and so may return to them when they see others do like them.

N.C. Hold you content, Neighbour. They will never return to one that is an *Apostate*, and *hath forsaken his Principles*. And that I am sure you will grant your Minister hath done; though you will not have him call'd a Time-server.

C. You have a company of the most frivolous exceptions against our Ministery that ever I heard of. None of which (as I might have shewn you all along) are

suffici-

sufficient to justifie your separation from us, were they true. But being as they are, either false Imputations, or else such things as no man need be asham'd of, you can the less be excused for your forsaking our Assemblies. As for this that you charge our Minister withal, I have reason to think it is a Forgery, and that he never had any other Principles than he hath now. Or if he had, what do you say to those who stuck so fast to their Principles, that it cost them all they were worth? Are there not a great number of these among our Clergy-men? And do you not hate these as much as any else? nay look upon them as your old Enemies, because you remember what Enemies you were to them?

N. C. There are a great many, I am certain, that were once ours, and now are fallen away to you. Those I abhor a great deal more than your old Clergy, and cannot endure to hear them?

C. Suppose there may be many such; yet there is no reason for this strong Antipathy against them. For it is like they were very young when they followed you; and may say, as S. *Paul*, *When I was a Child, I spake as a Child, I understood as a Child, I thought* (or reasoned) *as a Child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

N. C. Belike you think ours a Childish Religion.

C. Perhaps I do, and for any thing you know, can prove it to be so in great part. But that's not our business now; which is only to shew, that it's no shame for any body to think and speak otherwise than he did, provided his Judgment be grown more ripe and manly. What? Do you think Youth must never examine the Principles they receive with their Education, nor judge for themselves when they are able? If you would not have them follow their Masters or Parents, as Horses and Asses do those that lead them in a string, why do you blame any

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of them that consider who it is that leads him, and whether he is carrying him? nay, that forsakes the track in which he hath always walked, when he finds it to be wrong?

N.C. Nay, a great many Old men have forsaken their Principles, who, one would think, should have had more wit or more honesty.

C. They have nevertheless for that: For I hope you are not too old to learn. And this is all you can make of it, that once they thought it unlawful to do according to their present practice; but *days have taught them Wisdom*, and given satisfaction to their Scruples. Beside, the extravagant Freaks and the mad fantastick Tricks which were plaid in Religion, when you reigned, opened many mens eyes (whom you had deluded by fair speeches and goodly pretences) to see their folly in condemning and cashiering Bishops and Common Prayer.

N.C. You have an art of Apologizing for any thing.

C. Let's see your skill in that art; for I would fain try it a little. What will you say, if none be found so guilty of this which you charge us withal as your own dear selves?

N.C. I will say, that you can prove any thing.

C. No: you shall only say, that they have the least reason of all other men to talk against forsaking Principles, who have done it so notoriously.

N.C. I cannot but wonder at your confidence. Are not your very Senses convinced of the contrary? Do you not see how they suffer for their Consciences; how they are deprived of their Liberty, and have lost good Benefices. If they would have forsaken their Principles, what needed they have been thus deprived? ——

C. You need say no more, for, I know it all beforehand. But pray be not you too confident, nor take it ill that I stop you thus in your carier; since I think you will spend your breath to little purpose. Answer me soberly a few

few questions, and then perhaps you will thank me for saving you the pains you were about to take. Do you not remember a time when the *Covenant* was magnified as the most Sacred thing in the world, next the Holy Scriptures? Did you never meet with such a passage as this in Commendation of it? *This Oath is such, and in the matter and consequence of it of such concernment, as I can truly say, it is worthy of us, yea of all these Kingdoms, yea of all the Kingdoms of the World?* If you have not, it is to be found in Mr. *Nye's Exhortation* at the taking of the Covenant, *Septemb.* 25. 1643. *pag.* 2.

N.C. What of all this? is there any thing we more suffer for than that holy Covenant?

C. Surely that Gentleman and a great number beside (who now are followed and esteemed above *our Changelings*, as you are pleased to call them) have long since altered their minds, and reprobated that Covenant; or, to speak in his own words, *they have been found to purpose, nay more, to vow and to swear, and all this according to the flesh; so that with them there is, notwithstanding these Obligations. Yea, yea,* and *Nay, nay*; pag. 5. A thing which he there accuses of great falsness and inconstancy, such as is not to be shewn amongst us.

N.C. What do you tell me of *Independents?* We have nothing to do with them.

C. Yes, but you have. For it appears by your discourse, that your Opinions now are a mixture of the Fancies of more Sects than theirs. And as for your Ministers, it's plain that they are in part turn'd *Independents*, (which is a gross Apostacy from their Principles) having Congregations in several places that have no Dependency one upon another.

N.C. They are forced to it.

C. If that be a good excuse, no body will want an Apology for his faults, which he will find there was some necessi-

necessity or other for. But (I pray) do you not remember such a *creature* some years ago, as the people called a *Lay Elder*, but by your Ministers was named a *Ruling Elder*?

N. C. Yes.

C. And you remember it was disputed very hotly, whether he were one of *God's creatures* or of *Man's*.

N. C. Very well.

C. And the Ministers whom you adhere to, confidently affirm'd that their *Ruling Elders* were by Divine right, and ought to be admitted not only upon the account of prudence, but as seated by God in the Church as *Church-Officers*. If you doubt of it, read the *Vindication of Presbyterial Government*, set forth 1649, from *pag.* 34. to *pag.* 55.

N. C. I know their Opinion well enough.

C. But can you tell me what is become of these creatures? doth not the whole *species* seem to be lost among you? what is the reason that we hear never a word of them?.

N. C. They are still in their first Principles.

C. You grow witty. But it will not serve your turn; for I should think the Principles are lost as well as they. Else what's the cause you have none of them in your private Congregations, where you may do what you list? Either you have deserted those Principles, or else your Covenant which I am sure you thought bound you to maintain these. Chuse which part you will; for either of them will serve my turn.

N. C. I never troubled my head much about those *Seniors*, and therefore do not much care what is become of them.

C. But you should think what is become of your Ministers Principles, who, I believe, are content now to let the *Lay Elders* die; they being but the creatures of men, and so of a mortal nature.

N. C. It

N. C. It is no great matter if they do, and never rise again.

C. Good. But I have another Question to ask you. Was not there a time when this was a Principle among your Ministers, *that they should obey the Orders of the Magistrate under whom they lived, if they were not sinful?*

N. C. I am not much acquainted with their Opinions in those matters.

C. You may know them then by their Practices, (which I suppose you will by all means have to be consistent with their Principles.)

N. C. What Practices?

C. I think there were Orders in the late Times that no man should pray publickly for *King CHARLES*, and they obey'd them. They were required also to keep a thanksgiving for the *Victories at Dunbar and Worcester*; with which I believe the most, if not all, complied. Nay, that Thanksgiving was repeated every year at *Whitehall*, and I believe *Cromwell* found some among you that would not deny to carry on the Work of that day.

N. C. What do you infer from hence?

C. That they have forsaken their Principles. For now they will not obey the King's Orders. Mark what I say: They would obey Usurpers, because they had a Power for the time being; and now they disobey their Sovereign, whose Power they acknowledge to be just, and who commands things that are not unlawful. As for example, they will not hear Common-Prayer, (at least many of them do not) which they can if they list: nor will they observe an Holy-day, which is no more unlawful to be kept, one would think, than one of those thanksgivings. Give me a reason, for instance, why the *Nine and twentieth of September* may not as well be observed as the *Third* sometime was.

N. C. That day is observed for superstitious purposes,

to remember the Victory of *Michael* over the *Dragon*.

C. Suppose it were. Is not that a great deal better than to remember the Victory of *Cromwel* over the *King*.

N.C. That was but once, and away.

C. But once all over the City and Kingdom; yet every year at *Whitehal*. But why is not that lawful to be done alway which we may do once, the reason continuing still the same?

N.C. You love to rip up old things, which had better be forgotten.

C. Not I. But you force me to it, by reflecting upon the old principles of some of our men. And how can one chuse (upon such an occasion) but take notice of the Fantastical nesse of your mens Consciences, (at least some of them) that are so nice and squeamish in some Fits, and at another time can swallow any thing?

N.C. I do not see but they are the same.

C. That's strange; when they are so scrupulous now, and were so little scrupulous then: or at least could do things with a Reluctance and Regret, and perhaps some Fears and doubts in their minds in those days: and now nothing will serve them but perfect Satisfaction. If you would have me speak plain, and shew you the difference between things they did then and those they will not do now, I will take the pains.

N.C. Save your self the labour, I have no mind to hear more of it.

C. That is, you have no mind to see how they have left their *Principles*, or at least do not act according to them.

N.C. They know their own Principles better than you.

C. Would they would let us know something of them, that so we might have a reason for some other alterations we see in them.

N.C. What are they?

C. Did you never hear them cry out against *Separation*,

and forsaking of *publick Ordinances?* Were there not many books writ to this purpose, when they possessed the Pulpit?

N. C. I perceive whither you are going.

C. And you shall not stir, but go along with me. Consider, I beseech you, what are become of those Principles; or how much are their present practices condemned by them? Do they not keep private Meetings every week, and that in the time of the Publick Service, as I told you before? Are they not thereby kept from Church themselves, and do they not thereby keep away a great many others? Tell me (good Neighbour) what is this but a *down right Separation* from us?

N. C. They are not for a Separation from *Christ's Ordinances*, but from *yours*.

C. Ours are *Christ's* Ordinances as much as any you frequent; for we pray and give thanks to God in his Name. And we do this according to his appointment; praying only for such things as he would have us, and no other. As for words, I hope you grant that neither yours nor ours know any ordained by him, but the *Lord's Prayer*, which we use, and you perhaps do not. And as for Ceremonies, I know those very men now separate from us, who heretofore approved those books which were writ against separation upon the account of Ceremonies. And whatsoever you imagine, they do not think our publick Ordinances (as they now stand) are Antichristian, or that it is unlawful to be present at them. Therefore I must have a better reason for their Separation from our Assemblies; or else you must confess that they (not we) have chang'd their Principles.

N. C. I doubt not but they have a Reason.

C. No more do I. They have, without question, a great many: but they are *carnal reasons*.

N. C. Why are you so censorious?

C. I am content they should have other reasons: but I speak according to your conceptions of them.

N.C. You are very Mysterious on a sudden.

C. Methinks the matter is plain. If they have sound reasons to alter their Principles, then we have done. If they have not, what reasons can they be but carnal ones, which alter their practice?

N.C. I do not love to hear you talk thus.

C. Nor do I love to hear my self talk thus: but you constrain me to it. And (I pray you) whether you love it or no, do so much as hear me one word more.

N.C. You may speak your mind.

C. Was there not a time when your Ministers would by no means hear of *Liberty of Conscience?* Did they not cry out upon it in their Pulpits and their books, and call it *Cursed Toleration?* Read but a Book called *A Testimony to the truth of* Jesus Christ, *and to our Solemn League and Covenant*, &c. subscribed by the Ministers of the Province of *London*, *Decemb.* 14. 1647. There you will find that among other abominable Errours and damnable Heresies, (as they are called, *pag.* 4.) this is condemn'd for one, *pag.* 32. *That little can be done, unless Liberty of Conscience be allowed for every man and sort of men to worship God in that way, and perform the Ordinances of* Christ *in that manner, as shall appear to them most agreeable to God's Word*, &c. This, among others, they call a *horrid and prodigious Opinion*; and tell us (*pag.* 32. and 33.) that it will lay the glory of the most high God in the dust, if it take place, and raze the Truth of *Christ* to the ground, and overthrow all *Christ's* Ordinances, and together therewith Magistrates and Ministers, and all Religious and comely Order, &c. In short, they say we shall be disown'd by all Reformed Churches, who will cry out, *Is this* England, *who covenanted to extirpate Popery, Prelacy, Superstition, Schism*, &c.

and

and after so long travel hath she now brought forth an hideous Monster of Toleration?

N.C. I know all this as well as you can tell me: and they are of the same mind still; for this was writ only against an *Universal Toleration of all Sects*, which they abhor.

C. I can tell you another story. They would not so much as tolerate *five poor men*, who professed to agree with them in all matters of Doctrine. Judge then what their Opinions were about Liberty, when they would not allow it to few *dissenting Brethren*.

N.C. That was a great while ago, and most of those streight-lac'd men are dead.

C. No such matter. But if they were, their Principles did not die with them, but survived in their followers. And yet now all on a sudden they are vanish'd. Now they are for Liberty of Conscience. By which if they mean only a Liberty for themselves, let them speak out, that all their Brethren of the Separation may hear them. And withal let them acquaint us by what title they claim this Favour more than the rest of the Sects that are sprung from them, who might take the liberty to separate from them, as well as they take the Liberty to separate from us. And before they prove that it is due to them, let them first answer their own Argument against the Independents, (which I can shew them in a *Letter of the* London *Ministers to the Assembly of Divines*) which was this; *That to grant a Toleration to them, and not to other Sectaries, will be counted Injustice.*

N.C. I perceive you are of a *persecuting spirit.*

C. You rather discover your self of a *turbulent spirit*, which cannot forbear to trouble and confound even our discourse. For that is not the business, whether all Restraint of mens liberty be persecution; nor whether I am for it or no: but to shew you that once your Ministers were of such a *spirit* as you call *persecuting*, & now are not.

N. C. Then they are changed for the better.

C. You should have said, Then they are chang'd, (which was the thing we were speaking of;) whether for the better or no, that's another question: And let them, if you please, resolve it. I believe they will not confess they were of a persecuting spirit, when they were against the Liberty which they now claim.

N. C. What, do you make them of no Principles at all?

C. Do not mistake me so. They are constant to some Principles, particularly this, *That all is well done that they do, though quite contrary to what they did before.*

N. C. You are bitter.

C. Do you like this Principle better, which they will not forsake, I warrant you, *That they are in God's way, and therefore ought to be tolerated; whereas all others are out of his way, and therefore ought not to be tolerated?*

N. C. You much offend me by these Reflections.

C. I'le tell you another then, that's more moderate, and will please you better: *That they must by all means keep you from coming to Church, for fear you should see that you may be as well taught elsewhere as in their private Meetings.*

N. C. I told you before, there is no danger of that.

C. But you told me no Reason, as I have shewn you, that's worth any thing.

N. C. We have one that will never suffer us to come to Church more, as long as your Ministers are there.

C. What terrible Scare-crow should that be?

N. C. To tell you the truth, many of us do not think *that they are Ministers.*

C. Now you have revealed the Bottom of your heart —Pardon me that sudden conclusion; you may have more yet lurking behind, which you have not told me. I should rather have said, Now you have revealed your Unskilfulness more than ever. For what have any

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of yours to qualifie them for the Ministery which ours have not as well as they? If you require the inward motions of the Spirit of God inclining a man to devote himself to this work; (which some of you think is enough) this ours profess to have felt, as you may see in the Form of ordering Priests. If it be further necessary to be approved by Presbyters, and to have their hands laid on them; this is not wanting to ours, as you may there also be satisfied.

N. C. But the Bishop lays on his hands also.

C. And can this unhallow them, when they are so dedicated to God?

N. C. Yes so I am told.

C. Then you would sooner believe what one of your own Party says without any reason; than what we say with all the reason in the world; which is plainly partial affection.

N. C. Why so?

C. Is it not apparent that a Bishop is a Presbyter too? though we think him more.

N. C. You acknowledge a distinction of persons in the Church, which is Antichristian.

C. Nay, then I have done with you. You condemn all the Ancient Church of Antichristianism; and more than that, the very Apostles themselves and the Evangelists, who it is manifest had some Superiority over their brethren. But observe whither you are run, having once left your way. You mix the very dregs of all other Sects with your own, and believe any thing that makes against us, even such things as the Minister you commonly hear would be asham'd to say. First, you only disliked the Common-Prayer; then you did not love the man that read it; next you would not come to hear him; and now you will not allow him to be a Minister; nay, rather than suffer him to enjoy that name, you will venture

to deprive Apostolical men of their Office, who exercised an Authority over their brethren.

N. C. Suppose they did; yet they were not *Lords*.

C. No, nor do we *ordain* any *Lords* when we make Bishops. That's an Honour which the King doth them, to qualifie them to sit in Parliament, and advise about the Affairs of the Realm, in which they are as much concern'd as other men.

N. C. If their Lordships would preach more, perhaps we might like them better.

C. I doubt not. For those that do, you will not come to hear.

N. C. Their Lawn-sleeves offend us.

C. And why should you not as well take offence at the White Cap and the Lace which I have often seen under the Black upon your Ministers heads?

N. C. Any thing becomes a Godly man.

C. I thought thither would be your retreat. But why are not the Bishops Godly too?

N. C. They do not love and encourage good men.

C. You still suppose none are good but your selves; which is no great token of that Modesty and Humility which we think necessary to make a Godly man. But suppose any of them should be so bad as not to countenance the very best among us, but rather the worst; yet this would be only the fault of the *Men*, not of the *Office*.

N. C. I have often heard that Distinction; but I could never love your Logick.

C. Yes sometimes. For you once liked a more subtil Distinction than this, and that was between the *King's personal and politick capacity* ——

N. C. Pray forbear to scratch those old sores. But why do your Bishops oppose all *Praying by the Spirit*?

C. I thought you might come to that at last, and I fansie it is the great quarrel you have with them.

N. C. Verily

N. C. Verily it is.

C. Then let me assure you the *Bishops* are the farthest of any men in the world from opposing *Praying by the Spirit.*

N. C. You tell me a thing incredible. I should come sometimes to hear your Ministers but that they have not the Spirit of Prayer; which the *Bishops* (I suppose) suppress and keep down all they can.

C. Belike then you think that to *pray by the Spirit*, and *to have a Spirit of Prayer*, are all one.

N. C. Why not? I know no difference.

C. Because I am sure ours have a Spirit of Prayer: but neither ours nor yours can pray by the Spirit. If they could, the Bishops would rather suffer Martyrdom than oppose it.

N. C. I apprehend you not.

C. Very likely: for I see you have been nourished with phrases, but understand very little.

N. C. Pray try if you can make me understand more, since it seems you are so skilful.

C. Hear me quietly then, and I will tell you what I have learn'd. For my skill is only borrow'd from such good men as our *Parish Priest*; whom you (I doubt) sometime deride, and scornfully call by that name.

N. C. I am in no passion: speak your mind.

C. Tell me then; when a man reverently addresses himself to God, seriously acknowledges his Authority over all his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, professes to depend upon him intirely, dreads his Displeasure, waits upon him for his grace and favour, hungers and thirsts after Righteousness, and devoutly renders his Thanks to the Possessor of Heaven and Earth for all his benefits, hath he the Spirit of Prayer, or no?

N. C. I cannot say but he hath, if his heart go along with his lips.

C. Then our Ministers have the Spirit of Prayer; for

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in all appearance, and as far as we can judge, they have an inward sense of these things when they pray. And as for their words and gestures, they are generally more reverent and becoming than yours.

N. C. Methinks you should not be of that mind.

C. Truly I have heard such bold, and sometimes rude, things spoken by some of yours in Prayer, that I could not think they had any sense and feeling of God at all at that time. Their Gestures also were ridiculous. Nay, I have seen some of them look about upon the people (to see I suppose, how they were affected) when they should have turn'd their eyes toward Heaven. Which was an argument to me they had something else in their mind then, more than God.

N. C. Then it seems you hear them sometimes.

C. Not now. But I have heard them heretofore, when they preached in our Churches.

N. C. O! but if you could hear them now, you would say they are full of the Spirit.

C. Because they pour out such abundance of words.

N. C. No, but they are more *earnest* than ever; and they *plead* with God after a more effectual manner.

C. You call Loudness of speech *Earnestness*; which I always took to be the ardent desire of our Souls after that good which we humbly beg of God. And as for their *pleading* with God, I think it is rather *saucinesse*.

N. C. Now you are bitter.

C. If I thought so. I should condemn my self as much as you can do; for I have learn'd, that we ought to *put away all wrath, bitterness, clamour, and evil speaking*. Nay, if I thought I had done amiss, I would ask forgiveness, not only from God, but from you too.

N. C. That is a good mind. But why did you use such an harsh expression? Is it not one of *Jobs* words? *Job* 16.21.

C. Yes, but not in your sense. For he would willingly have

have maintained his innocency, and have had his Cause argued that he might make it appear he was not so guilty as his friends made him: Which is nothing to your purpose; who, I suppose, do not intend (though you call *Jesus Christ, a Days-man* between God and us) to stand upon your defence, and justifie your selves before him. This you think too great a boldness, do you not?

N. C. Yes.

C. Why then may I not call it a Saucines in you to do a great deal more; I mean, to question God so much as you are wont, and to ask him over and over again what's the reason he doth not this or that, and why he suffers you to be so and so, and how he can deny you this or the other thing?

N. C. Doth not *David* sometimes ask questions?

C. Yes, in a great agony of spirit, and upon some great occasion: which will not warrant you to take this unheard of boldness. So I call it; because things done in imitation of others, when we are not in that condition, and have not that occasion, & that spirit also which they had, are very fulsome; no better than the motions of a Monkey when he imitates a man. To do those things also commonly which those great men did now and then, is monstrously unbeseeming. Besides, his Psalms are pieces of Divine Poetry, in which Passions are wont to be expressed much otherwise than they ought to be in plain & familiar speech. And yet you not only venture to use their figures of speech, but you go beyond them. Like a man that having light upon a good figure in Rhetorick, will never have done with it, but is always touching upon it. Than which nothing can be more absurd, especially if he heap a great many of these figures together, as your manner is, asking God over & over again, (as I said) why he doth not this or that, & when he will do it. Besides, that which in a great agony (as I said) is very decent to be spoken, doth not

befit

befit a man's mouth at another time; but they that go about to imitate it, do a thing unnatural. And the truth is, you seem to me to endeavour by these questions to put your selves and the people into a great passion, and a kind of agony; but they do not spring (I perswade my self) nor arise of themselves from any ardency of Devotion. But there is another thing that offends me more than all this; that having stirr'd up some confused passions in your selves by this and other such like means, you proceed to such an high degree of confidence in this bold way of Arguing with God, that you quite forget who you are speaking to. For some have told him that he little knew how his enemies insulted, (or some such things,) and that if he did but know how desirous they were of such a thing, or how much they would prize it, he would not deny them.

N. C. Pray, Sir, hold your peace, or I will stop my ears. You abuse good men.

C. I tell you only what is credibly reported: and if it be not so, I shall be very glad. But I must add, that they take such a liberty of saying any thing to God, which they would say to one another, that I conceive it not unlikely that some might fall into those unseemly (others perhaps will call them blasphemous) expressions. Are not you of the same mind?

N. C. I cannot deny but that they use *great familiarity* with God.

C. Familiarity do you call it? would the world had never known it: For it is such a one as hath bred in mens minds a contempt of God and Religion. It hath taught every body to let that member loose which ought to be always bridled, especially in God's presence. They vent all their fooliſh Opinions to him; they tell him News, and inform him how things go abroad; which they have received many times upon a false report: which hath brought such a scandal upon Religion, that it cannot

cannot but grieve any good man's heart to think on't.

N. C. It is such as *you* that have brought Religion into contempt, and not *we*.

C. How so, I pray you?

N. C. By *despising the Spirit*.

C. It is false, We reverence that Spirit which was in the Apostles; and if we could see such an one again, none would entertain it with greater gladness. We acknowledge also the power of the Spirit of God still in the hearts of men, especially of those who are good; and we bless God continually for it. But that which we deny is this, That either you or we are able (as I told you) *to pray by the Spirit*.

N. C. Do you not then despise the Spirit?

C. No; we suppose there is no such thing as Prayer by the Spirit: if there were, we should reverence it.

N. C. Would you would tell me your meaning.

C. I mean a prayer immediatly dictated by the Holy Ghost, as some were in the Apostles day.

N. C. I understand you not.

C. Such a prayer, in which by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost a man conceives those things which he speaks to God. Or (in plainer terms) I mean, that the Spirit of God doth not now suggest to any of us (when we pray) the very matter and words which we utter. If you pretend to this, then those prayers are as much the Word of God as any of *David*'s Psalms, or as any part of the Bible; and (being written from your mouths) may become Canonical Scripture.

N. C. But we do not pretend to this.

C. I wish then you would not talk as if you did. I am sure, your discourses of Prayer are commonly such, that one would think you took your selves to be full of the Holy Ghost. And this I must tell you hath made a great many scorn Religion, when they saw the Spirit of God

intitled

intitled to such pitiful stuff as they heard many vent with the greatest confidence.

N. C. This is their own fault.

C. And yours to.

N. C. I cannot believe that our Prayers ever had any such effect.

C. But I can; and I will tell you how. You continually tell us that the Bishops by prescribing a Form, limit and stint the Spirit. By which Spirit you mean the Spirit of God, not your own. From whence it follows, that you think (or would have the world think) that the Spirit of God speaks in you when you pray, and that you utter its mind and words. Now many men hearing you pray so inconsiderately and wildly, uttering most absurd (if not impious) things, yet with a mighty zeal and confidence, have been tempted to think that whatsoever is said of the Spirit, even in the Apostles days, might possibly be no more than such an Extravagance and Fury as this.

N. C. A most sensless conceit.

C. I think so too. But you have given occasion to such conceits in those that are inclin'd to Infidelity.

N. C. I hope not. For we only mean, when we say we pray by the Spirit, that the Holy Ghost assists us.

C. With what? Doth it furnish you with words?

N. C. No, with devout and ardent affections.

C. This indeed you should mean; but your brags of the Spirit import more.

N. C. Pray, Sir, use no such reproachful words: we boast of nothing.

C. Well, pardon me that word. But if you do not brag, yet you say that you can *pray by the Spirit*, and we cannot, at least do not. In which you ascribe something more to your selves than is to be found among us.

N. C. Yes.

C. Then you mean more by *praying by the Spirit* than

than being inspir'd with devout Affections. For those you cannot deny we may have as well as you, and unless you will take upon you to search the heart, you must grant we feel them, since we protest that we do. From whence I conclude, whatsoever you say, that your men would have you believe that it is the Spirit which speaks in them and by them when they pray. Which is a thing that reproaches not only them, but the very Spirit of God, and (as I said before) hath at least confirm'd men in their Atheistical or unbelieving inclinations.

N. C. Well, I will not dispute this with you any longer. But tell me seriously, do you think that men could pray with that readiness and elocution, and length, if they were not mightily assisted by the Spirit of God?

C. Yes indeed do I. Their own spirits will serve them for this purpose; if they be but indued with good phansies and a sufficient measure of boldness. For it is a great vertue (I assure you) in this case not to be modest; though we reckon it a singular vertue to be so.

N. C. I cannot think it possible.

C. Why? Neighbor, you may take my word for this. There are many of our men could out-do you in this Gift (as you call it) of Prayer, if they would give themselves the liberty, and yet you would not think them inspir'd, I am sure, I mean, they are able to speak so readily and fluently, so earnestly and passionately of all manner of things, and to continue this strain so long, and that without humming or hawing, that if you did not know them, perhaps you would admire them above most of your own.

N. C. Then I should conclude they had the Gift of Prayer but suppress it.

C. So they have; but it is both in you and us only a Natural gift, or acquir'd by Exercise, and Practice, and Imitation ——

N. C. Now

N. C. Now you speak prophanely.

C. I speak the sense of the soberest of your own Party, (as I verily believe) who would say the same, if they durst but deal plainly with you. And (as simple as I am) I dare undertake to justifie the truth of what I say against any of them, if they have the face to contradict it.

N. C. I see you leave the Spirit of God nothing to do in our Prayers.

C. Would you would see how you forget your self. Did I not tell you what the Spirit of Prayer was? how that God bestows it upon us, when he gives a sense of himself and of our needs, and stirs up in us holy desires, and passionate longings after his Righteousness; which we should express in such words as are becoming that Majesty with whom we have to do? And this is the reason that we take care to chuse our words, and not leave them to extemporary invention, especially in the publick Service of God.

N. C. Do you think they will ever want Words whose hearts are full of Desires? or can great Affections ever fail to furnish us with plenty of Language?

C. Yes, that they may. For all experience tells us, that very great and high Affections are too big for words, and make a man at a stand for want of Expressions; which no man sure will think a seemly thing in a publick Congregation. And the passions of Admiration and Reverence of God restrain a mans forwardness of speaking to him, and make him like a few words best, which he is not then in a fit case to invent. As for lesser Affections and superficial heats; I grant they seldom let a man want words (if he have tolerable Parts) and make him speak more readily than he would do at another time: yet they are not able ever to furnish him with those that are fit, proper and decent. Which methinks should make you not quarrel with a sober form of words, at least in our publick Devotions.

N. C. Would

N.C. Would you could perſwade me that a Form of words is lawful to be uſed; it would go a great way to perſwade me to come to your Church.

C. Strange that you ſhould be ſo inapprehenſive! It is ſo lawful to uſe a Form of words, that I have ſhewn you it is in a ſort neceſſary: that is, we can have no ſecurity that the Service of God will always be performed well without one.

N.C. I confeſs I do not yet apprehend you.

C. Obſerve then. I ſay, the beſt of men, though their hearts be full of good deſires, may, from ſome cauſe or other, want ſuch words as are fit and proper to expreſs their meaning. In this caſe they muſt hack in an unſeemly manner, or make a ſtop, or uſe ſuch words as are too rude and ſlovenly, or ſpeak broken and imperfect language, or at the beſt ſuch as is too hard and obſcure, and unintelligible by the Vulgar. None of which things are to be permitted in the publick Worſhip, which ought to be performed with the greateſt ſolemnity and gravity. And therefore to prevent that Undecency, and ſecure the Service of God from all that is unhandſome, you muſt conſent to a preſcribed Form of words, wherein men ſhall addreſs their humble and hearty Deſires to him. For though ſome men, at ſome times, may pray well enough; yet other men, and the ſame men at other times, may be very confuſed, and full of Tautologies; and it's well if they endeavor not to ſupply theſe defects with rude Clamors, bruiſh Noiſes, and a deal of the Holy Scriptures wofully miſapplied. Beſide; how can you perſwade any ſtrangers to be of our Church, or to hold any Communion with us, if they do not know how we worſhip God? And how ſhould they know that, unleſs you can produce ſomething which by a general conſent is own'd for his Service? This no doubt is one reaſon why all Churches in the world have had their publick

Forms of Prayer, that they may let every body know how God is ſerved by them; and why the beſt men in Reformed Churches have wiſhed thoſe happy days might come of amity and friendſhip, that they might by a Common Councel and Conſent form a certain Liturgy, which might be as a Symbol and bond of concord among them all. And truly I cannot deviſe how your Miniſters can juſtifie themſelves in ſeparating now from all the Reformed Churches, (as well as ours) with whom they covenanted to maintain an Uniformity, not only in Doctrine and Diſcipline, but Worſhip alſo. To me they ſeem to live in an open breach of one branch of that Covenant, of which they are ſo tender. For they do not *endeavour in their place and calling to reform according to the example of thoſe Churches.*

N.C. What ſhould they reform now they have no power?

C. Themſelves and their Congregations, which they take the boldneſs to gather; who ought to ſerve God (according to the Covenant) after the example of the beſt Reformed Churches; all of which have an Order and Form of Prayer, and never imagin'd that thoſe written Forms did bind up and ſtint the Spirit. This is a peculiar phanſie of your own, who have no Form at all in any of your Conventicles or Meetings; though it is in the power of your Miniſters to have one; as well as to hold ſuch Meetings, and though they be bound by their League and Covenant to do their endeavour to imitate thoſe that have. Nay, I much queſtion whether they uſe the Lord's Prayer. They that do (I believe) have the leaſt company; ſuch is the prejudice which they (contrary to their Covenant) have ſow'n in peoples minds againſt Forms of Prayer, even that of the Lord's. Which thing conſidered, it makes me aſtoniſh'd at your impudence in pretending ſuch nicenеſs of Conſcience, and fear to break your Covenant;

venant; when you break it every time you meet together without some Form of Divine Service.

N.C. They only covenanted to reform this Church of *England* according to the example of the best Reformed Churches: which they cannot do.

C. Only, do you say? Is that a less thing than to reform a particular Congregation? Methinks they should think themselves obliged to do what they can, when they cannot do what they would; and to do that in a part, which they cannot do in the whole; that is, bring in some Form of Prayer into your Churches, for so no doubt you esteem them.

N.C. I do not think they can if they would.

C. Why?

N.C. Because most of us think Forms unlawful.

C. That's their fault, who either taught you to believe so heretofore, or do not instruct you now to believe otherwise. Though it were a very easie thing for them to do it, and convince you of your error, even from your own Practice.

N.C. My Practice? I never use any, and I think never shall.

C. It is a wonderful thing that you should be so blind. Do you never sing the *Psalms of David*, and that as they are translated into *English* Metre?

N.C. Yes.

C. Those are Prayers and Petitions as well as Thanksgivings, are they not? And let me tell you, the words are so mean and sometime uncouth, nay, the sense of the Prophet so often mistaken in that Translation which is commonly used; that if you had so much to except against the Common-Prayer, as may reasonably be excepted against many things there, there would be no end of your Complaints; you would be ten times louder in your Clamours than you are.

N. C. Indeed I did not think of this.

C. Your Ministers do; but are not so sincere as to give you notice of it, lest you should be disabused, and they should lose your Custom. But pray think of it your self hereafter; and tell me why it is not as lawful to use a Form of Prayer in Prose, as to use one in Verse. You will be a marvellous man, if you can shew a Reason of the Difference.

N. C. But this Form is not taken out of the *Mass-Book*, as the Common Prayer is.

C. Then you lay down your quarrel at a *Form* of Prayer; and only scruple *this Form* now in use; and that because it hath been used in the *Roman* Church.

N. C. Very right.

C. Then pray lay aside your *Bible* too: at least cut the *Psalter* out of your book, for that's much in use in their Service.

N. C. You go too fast; that is the word of God, and therfore to be used; but any thing else used in the Church of *Rome* I think we should have nothing to do with.

C. This is a foolish exception. For the Reason you gave me concludes against the use of the *Psalms* too, or else it concludes nothing, which I thus demonstrate. You lay down this Propolition, *Whatsoever is used in the Service of the* Roman *Church must not be used by us*. To this I add another; The *Psalms* and other *Scriptures* are used in the *Service of the* Roman *Church*. Now do you draw any other Conclusion if you can from these two, but this, That *those Scriptures must not be used by us*. If you like not this Conclusion, then you must mend the first Proposition, (which is your own, and you may do what you will with it;) as for mine, it cannot be mended, for it is certainly true. Now how will you mend it, but by allowing us the use of whatsoever is good in their Service? And then you must admit of more than the Scrip-

ture to be used by us, even all that is according to the Scripture: as our Prayers certainly are; though some of them are but Translations of the *Latine* Prayers used in that Church.

NC. I will mend it in this manner: Whatsoever they use (except it be the Word of God) we are not to use it.

C. It is mere humour that makes you limit it in this manner. For there is something good besides the Scripture, viz. that which is writ, said, or done according to it. And why they should make any thing of this nature unuseful to us by their using it, since you confess the Holy Scripture, notwithstanding their use, may abuses of it, is not prophaned thereby, is past my capacity to understand. But perhaps you will be more sensible of what I say, if I tell you that upon these principles you must reject the use of the *Creed*, commonly called the *Apostles Creed*, because it is Professed there in Divine Service as well as here.

NC. I would not willingly go so far from them.

C. Not go? you must whether you will or no, if you will follow your Principles, which will carry you so far, and a great deal farther. For this is the very bottom on which your Discourse stands; that whatsoever hath been in use by a bad company of men, must by no means be used by us in God's Worship; except only such portions of Holy Scripture as shall be thought fit to be read in our Assemblies. From whence it follows, that you may not lift up your Eyes to Heaven, nor Kneel when you pray, nor —

NC. Now methinks you rave.

C. Pray hear me a little, and you shall see it's you that are wild, and not I: so wild, as to practise that which you condemn. If we must not do what the *Church of Rome* doth in the worship of God, then much less what *Heathens* have done; and still do; for they are worse than the *Roman* Church.

N.C. I think your Propoſition is good enough, but who doth that which the Heathen Idolaters were wont to do?

C. That did the *Jewiſh* Church, and that do you.

N.C. Prove that.

C. So I will; and you ſhall have Scripture for it. The *Jews* and you alſo *Bow your Knees or Bodies to God*, and the *Heathens* bowed their Knees to *Baal*, and Bodies to *Rimmon*, 2 *Kings* 5.18. 2 *Kings* 19.18. You all lift up your Eyes to Heaven when you Worſhip; and the Heathen lifted up their eyes to their Idols, as appears by the practice in *Iſrael*, who imitated their Cuſtoms, *Ezek.* 18. 12. and 33. 25. You ſtretch out your hand to God, and ſo the Cuſtom was to do to a ſtrange God, *Pſal.* 44. 20. The Heathen ſate down at their Feaſts, when they eat of the Sacrifices in the Temples of their Gods, 1 *Cor.* 8.10. *Exod.* 32.6. which is the very poſture which you are ſo fond of when you come to feaſt with *Chriſt*, in the holy Sacrament of his Body and Bloud ſacrificed for us. I would adde more, but that it would be tedious. And the truth of it is, good men uſe that every day well which bad men uſe ill: And therefore I ſee not but we may do ſo with many things practiſed in the *Romane* Church. Do not good men uſe the Name of God with Reverence, which wicked men continually blaſpheme? Do we not refreſh our ſelves with Meat and Drink, of which many Debauched perſons take a Surfeit? Thoſe fine Cloaths which ſome wear for pride, do not others wear becauſe they beſit their Quality? And, to come nearer our buſineſs, Thoſe Prayers which ſome men mumble over, others read devoutly; and thoſe Garments which ſome may uſe as holy, others uſe as decent. What ſhould all us then, I ask you once again, that we cannot rightly uſe thoſe things which the Church of *Rome* abuſes? ſay thoſe good Prayers, for inſtance in *Engliſh*, which they ſay in *Latine*? wear a white Garment

with

without any Ceremony to consecrate it, which they hallow with many Prayers, and Crossings, and Holy water? Nay, use the sign of the Cross it self upon one occasion only once, after the Sacrament of Baptism, and meerly as a token the Child is already become a Servant of the Crucified *Jesus*; which they use upon all occasions, before and in Baptism, a great many times, and that also to drive away the Devil, and to make the Sacrament more efficacious? There are an hundred things more, present themselves to my thoughts about these matters; but I am ashamed to discourse any longer against so absurd a Principle as yours. For in my judgment you may as well *do* some things which the Church of *Rome* doth, as *believe* some things which she believes; as I hope you do. Nay, you believe even what the Devil believes. And as it would be a very dangerous rule, if any one should say, Believe quite contrary to what the Devil believes; so it is no less (but rather more) dangerous to say, Do quite contrary to what the Church of *Rome* doth.

N.C. I have not much to say against your discourse; but we have a perswasion among us, that nothing is lawful to be done by you or any body else in the Worship of God, but what is enjoyn'd by himself in his Word. And then what becomes of your Crossing and Chaunting and Kneeling, with all the rest of your Inventions? are they not all Idolatrous?

C. This is the wildest phansie that we have yet heard, as many of our Ministers have shewn by unanswerable Arguments. For it makes that unlawful which the Scripture allows; in which we find many Holy men doing those things (without any censure) in God's Worship which he had no where commanded. Nay, it makes the Worship of God impossible; the Time, the Place, the Vesture in which it shall be performed being

no where appointed. It condemns also the best Christians in all Ages till of late, who without any scruple used Forms of Prayer, and such Rites as those about which there is all this stir. And, which perhaps will most move you, I have heard our Ministers shew that this Principle doth condemn your selves, who (when you take an Oath) do not refuse to lay your Hand upon the Book, and kiss the Gospel, according as the custom is. Now all agree that an Oath is a solemn act of Divine Worship, it being an acknowledgment of all God's Attributes, and he being invocated and call'd upon to be a Witness and a Judg in the case. And if that be an act of Worship, I am sure, Kissing the Book and Laying on the Hand are as much Ceremonies as Signing with the Cross: outward signs (I mean) accompanying the action of swearing, though they belong not to the Essence of it. And I am as sure that you can no where shew me that God hath commanded this Religious action to be attended with this Ceremony. Behold then, into what perplexities these men cast you! What Snares they intangle you and themselves in! Out of which they cannot set you free, but by acknowledging (as we do) that men may appoint this Ceremony in taking an Oath, though God hath not appointed it; according as in this very case, *Abraham* made his Servant put his Hand under his Thigh when he sware, though it were a thing no where commanded. But then consider again, that they and we may take the like liberty in other parts of Divine Worship, and submit to such Usages as are appointed by our Governors, provided they be no where forbidden. Or if, rather than condemn themselves, they will condemn good old *Abraham*, and say he followed the custom of the world too much: there is no way for you but to turn *Quakers*, and to condemn Clean cloaths when we come to worship God; to find fault with the Minister for standing in a Pul-

pit,

pit, for Preaching by a Glass, for wearing a Gown, yea, a Cloak or a Cap, especially with Ears: for none of these things are by any Divine Command.

N. C. I see you have something to say to every thing. If I did not know you, I should suspect you for a Jesuite.

C. That would be ridiculous. For if there be any of them in Lay-mens clothes, they do not perswade you to our Church, but from it; knowing that is the surest way to gain you, if they can once unsettle your minds, and fill you with Phancies: of which they will at last perswade you there is no end, till you rest your self in the bosom of that *Harlot* which you so much abhor.

N. C. I see one cannot weary you. But suppose these things be lawful in themselves; I am told they become unlawful when once they are enjoyn'd.

C. This is an Extravagance wilder than all that went before. They are so far from being unlawful by being commanded, that they become necessary to be done, I think.

N. C. I thought you would say so. But that's the very thing makes me think them unlawful when commanded; for it takes away Christian liberty by making them necessary to be done.

C. Goodly! what fine things do your Christians make themselves, that must be restrained in nothing, though for publick Orders sake? Nay, must over-rule the Laws of Christian Princes, and shew the power they have over their Commands? Do you think there ever were any Christians in the world before you that held themselves bound not to do a lawful thing, merely because his Sovereign would have it done? If he did command a thing unlawful, these were good reasons not to do it: but if he is like to be equally disobeyed when he commands things lawful or unlawful; nay,

and

and it be a duty to disobey him in both alike; he is in miserable circumstances, and had better never meddle with the Worship of God, but leave it to be ordered as every body phancies.

N.C. That's the best way.

C. Nay, now I think on't, there's a way to make you do what he likes best; and you shall hold your selves bound to it.

N.C. That's strange.

C. Not so strange as true. For when a Prince hath a mind you should do a thing, if I were of his Council, I would advise him to make a Law that you should not do it. For then you would either shew that you are people of a humoursome Conscience, that is guided by no certain Principles; or else, according to your own Rules, you would do what he forbids you. For as when he commands a thing about the Service of God, it becomes unlawful to be done: So when he forbids any thing, it becomes unlawful to let it alone; your Liberty being invaded by him either way. If he would but require therefore that no body should wear the Surplice, or use the Sign of the Cross; we should see all your Ministers with Surplices on their Backs, and all your Children crossed in the Fore-head: For else you would be restrained in your Liberty.

N.C. I never knew any man fetch things about in this fashion as you do. The truth is, you intangle me, but you do not perswade me.

C. I have not much hope of it; If you feel not the force of these arguments: Yet I'le try what a familiar Resemblance will do. We are agreed that the thing commanded by Authority, is not less indifferent in its own nature after it's commanded than it was before; but only our use of it is not so indifferent and at liberty. We must needs be therefore agreed also that

this Restraint comes not upon us from the things themselves, because still perfectly indifferent; but only from the Law, which ties us up: Now we say, that to this Law we are to be subject, not regarding our own Liberty so much as the Prince's Authority. You say, No. But as the Law cannot alter the Nature of the things, so it ought not to Restrain your Freedom in the use of them; but leave that as indifferent as the things themselves. That is, that the King ought to make no such Law about those matters: If he do, then it is unlawful to do what he commands to be always done; because he ought to leave you at Liberty to let it alone if you please, and you ought to maintain your Liberty, and by no means to part with it. Put the case then that you (being Master of a Family) will have your Children and Servants to come at a certain time and place, &c. to worship God. It is indifferent indeed in it self, and all one to God, whether it be at ten, eleven, or twelve a clock, or in what part of your House they meet, or in what Cloaths they come, or what Postures they use: But you appoint the hour of meeting shall be twelve; and that they come into your Parlour or Hall, or Chappel, if you have that conveniency: And beside, you require your Servants that they shall not come into your Parlour (suppose) in those Frocks wherein they just before rubb'd your Horse's Heels, (which you think not handsome or decent) but in their Liveries, or some such neater Apparel. And when they come there, you bid them stand some part of the time, and the rest you bid them sit, if they please, and at Prayers kneel, as you do your self. Let me ask you now; Do you really think that this is any such Restraint of their Liberty, as they have just cause to complain of it? Would you think you took too much upon you in making these Orders for your Family, of which you

are

are Governor? Or would you judge that Servant to be without fault, and guiltless of any Contempt, who should say, that he will come at ten of the clock, but not at twelve; because it matters not which, so the thing be done; and he will not be tied to any Order, but to do the thing? And suppose another should come and say, that he will pray, if you please to come into the Stable, but he will not come into the Parlour; for it is indifferent where it is, and he must not be confined to one place more than another. And a third should come and tell you that he is ready to joyn in Prayer, but then he must be in his Frock, otherwise he will not, for God may be served as well in that as any other Garment, and he must use his Christian Liberty, and not be bound to your Fashions. And the next should tell you, that he will sit in your presence, or else you shall not have his company: His reason is, because it is all one to God whether he be sit or stand; and he is not to let you be Master of his Freedom in those matters. What would you say to these people? Nay, what would you do with them? Would you excuse them, and acknowledge your own guilt in making such Injunctions? Or would you not rather treat them as a company of saucy Clowns and ill-bred Fellows, not fit to be kept in any orderly family? If you should not, all the world would hold you as ridiculous as they. For every Master of a family is vested with sufficient authority to see such commands as those observed. And when they that will not observe them, yet acknowledge them to be indifferent things, truly I think no body will think them harshly used, if they be turned out of doors. If they be Fools and Blocks, that cannot understand common sense; then (I confess) they are to be pitied, and his good nature may work so far as to bear with their simplicity, if they be otherwise good Servants. But for those Knaves that abused their simplicity, and insulted

these filthy Principles into them; deserve to be punish'd, and put out of his Service, till they acknowledge their fault, and learn more manners. Just like this is the present case before us. The Church is but a larger Family, a wider Society; in which the King is the Father and Supreme Governor. If he make some Laws for the more convenient, orderly and decent Worship of God there, which in themselves are Lawful, and declared not to be in their own nature necessary, but only prudent Constitutions; I cannot see but that those who refuse to obey them upon pretence of their Liberty, and that God may as well be worshipp'd without those things, do shew themselves as unmannerly, rude, and refractory persons, as the Children or Servants in that supposed Family, of which I bad you conceive your self Master. And I leave you to apply this case to that; and to make the parallel complete in your thoughts at your leisure. I hope it will be worth your labour, if you do it seriously.

N. C. It gives me some light into the business already. But still I wonder that all our Ministers should hold your Forms and Orders unlawful. Sure they have some better reason for it than I have.

C. Alass, good man! you are meerly abused. For though they are willing you should remain in the opinion of their Unlawfulness; they do not think so themselves.

N. C. What would you make of them? Do not I hear them constantly speak against them?

C. Nay, do you make what consequences you think fit from it. As for the thing it self, I will maintain, that those Ministers you hear (some indeed think otherwise) are not of the mind, that it is unlawful to come to Common Prayer, or wear a Surplice, or Kneel at the Sacrament.

N. C. You cannot make good your confident Assertion.

C. Why

C. Why man? I have seen them at the Prayers; and many of them have professed they did not think the Ceremonies such great Bugbears that one need to be afraid of them. And if this will not do, I have a more convincing Argument of their Opinion in these matters.

N. C. And do these very men now seem to dislike the publick Prayers?

C. Seem? you confess they speak against Forms. And we see the open affronts they put upon our Service, by meeting at the very time when it is performed: the reason of which I expounded to you before.

N. C. Therefore I always thought they accounted it unlawful.

C. No such matter. You should rather think something else; and (to help you a little) consider whether their Integrity be so great as you imagine.

N. C. Your meaning, Sir.

C. I mean, they do not seem to me to deal sincerely with you, in suffering you to live in this dangerous perswasion of the sinfulness of Common-Prayer and the Ceremonies when they know in their Consciences they are not sinful. And then to hear you call it *Bibble-babble*, *Porridge*, or such like vile names, without any reproof, is still worse. But if you hear *themselves* speak against the Common-Prayer and the Ceremonies; there is the greater reason to have a vehement suspicion of their Dishonesty; because they decry that which in their Consciences they allow.

N. C. I am not fully satisfied of that.

C. Why did many of them deliberate so long whether they should accept of Dignities in the Church, if they did not believe it lawful to hear the Prayers and to put even the *Babylonish* Garment (as you will needs call the Surplice) upon their backs; and more than that, to wear the very Rags of the Whore, the Lawn sleeves? If it was so

so plain a business, that their Conscience and their Covenant would not let them conform, one would think they should have possessed it openly without any more ado. And therefore I conclude, that Pause and Deliberation was about something else; not about matters of Conscience, but of Interest and Policy. As, Whether the people would take it well, and not laugh at them, as so many Magpies got upon a Perch: whether it would not be a scandalous thing, that is, not for their Credit and Reputation: whether they could not hold such a Party with them in Non-conformity, as would ballance the Episcopal, and so force them at least to a Toleration. In short, whether they should not lose the Affections of their own Party, which they had already made; and win very little upon the Affections of others, whom they had so much disobliged in the late Troubles. These were their secret Debates in their Cabals, the weighty Points that were to be stated in those Consultations. You, Good man, think perhaps that they spent their time in Fasting and Seeking God to direct their Consciences. No, no; it was not their Conscience, but their Credit, which then lay at stake ——

N. C. Why should you think so?

C. Because I have heard some of them acknowledg they did not scruple what we do, but thought it unhandsome for *them* to do it. Sometimes they put it in a more Religious Phrase, and said, it would give a great scandal to the world, who would think the worse of the Profession of Christianity. But the meaning was in plain *English*, that they were ashamed to confess their Error, and to set up those things again which they had rashly pulled down.

N. C. And would you not have men to consult their Credit?

C. Yes, but not so much as the Peace of the Church of God. We ought to deny our selves, and be content

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to be put to shame for God's sake; (which is indeed true Glory) and there is little of God among them that seek not Peace, though on those terms. Besides, there can no account be given of their Behaviour since in cherishing this Fancy among you, (or suffering it to grow) that Conformity is unlawful, unless it be this; that they think it will make more for their Reputation among you, if you believe it was Conscience, not care of their own Credit and Estimation, that kept them from Conforming.

N.C. You are severest the man that ever I knew, and love to search too far into the reason of things.

C. Would you would do so too; for then you would soon be of my mind.

N.C. No, not as long as one Scruple remains in my mind.

C. What's that?

N.C. I have heard some of them call yours, Will-worship, which the Apostle condemns, (*Col.* 2. *ult.*)

C. Very likely they might, and not understand what they said.

N.C. Do you believe they would, like brute Beasts, speak evil of things they know not?

C. I will not censure them of that, but this I can tell you, that one of your Ministers confessed to a sober person of my acquaintance, that he had never so much as read over the Common-Prayer-Book in all his life; and yet he was no Youngster. Perhaps there may be more such: and then if they speak against it, judge of them as you see Cause.

N.C. I believe such men dislike it without looking into it; because, as I told you, it is *Will-Worship*, a meer invention of man.

C. That's a word of S. *Paul*, whom no doubt they have read, but I question whether they understood him.

N.C. Why

N.C. Why should you doubt it?

C. Because, if we take the sense of the Word, not from Fancy, but from the matter wherewith it is connected, it makes nothing for your purpose, but rather much against you.

N.C. Can you tell better than they?

C. I do not say so; but I have heard one of our Ministers give such an Explication of the place as satisfied me, that you use a Weapon which wounds your selves.

N.C. Let's hear it.

C. If you look a little back, you will find the Apostle forbids *Worshipping of Angels*; (v. 18.) as a bold invention of men, for which there was no Revelation. And then he speaks against such superstitious people (whether *Jews*, or others, the Minister could not tell us) as made it unlawful to Marry, to eat some kind of Meats, to touch or come near some things, none of which God hath made sinful, but they were the meer Commandments of men, (v. 21. 22.) Now those that were of this Humour he immediatly after (v. 23.) charges with *Will-worship*. Which must consist, therefore, one would think, in these two things.

First, In giving the Worship due to God to some Creature or other. *Secondly*, in enjoyning that as a thing necessary, and commanded by God as a piece of his Worship and Service, which he hath left indifferent; or, in other words, when any thing is so enjoyned to be done or not done, as if it were the Will and Command of God he should be so served, when it is a meer Constitution of the Will of Man, then a *Will-worship* is erected. Now I am sure you will not make us guilty of the *First* sort of Will-Worship, because none are more against it than we. As for the *Second*, our Church hath declared to all the World, that none of the things you boggle at are imposed under the Notion of Necessary, for

Religious in themselves, or as commanded by God; but are of an indifferent Nature, and only used as decent and comely in the judgment of the present Governors, who can alter these things, and constitute something else in the room, if they see it fit; which they could not pretend to, did they think them necessary. But then, as our Church is not guilty of *Will-Worship* in the Apostles Sense; so, on the other side, I know not how to excuse those from that very guilt, who oppose what is ordained among us as unlawful, and forbid us to use those Rites and Orders, because sinful things. For they make that necessary to be forborn and left undone, which God hath not made so, but left indifferent; and so they in effect condemn those as Sinners whom God acquits from all blame. As those in the Apostle's Discourse, said, *Touch not, Taste not, Handle not*, so you say, *Kneel not, Pray not by a Form, Wear not a Surplice*, &c. Now since you think (as those men did) to please God by not doing those things which he hath no-where forbidden; I do not see but you commit the very fault which the Apostle reproves: That is, you make that necessary not to be done, (if we will be true Worshippers of God) which he hath not made necessary not to be done, but left us at liberty to do it if we please. By which means *you make a Religion of your own*, and study to honour God by abstaining from these things by which he never said that he was dishonoured. O that all tender Consciences would seriously consider this. For they would soon discern that your Ministers by forbidding those things now in dispute, lay greater burthens upon the Consciences of their Brethren, and clog them with more Duties, than God hath laid upon them. Whereas we, who think those things may be done, lay no other burthen upon the conscience than what God himself hath laid; which is, to obey our Governors in all things wherein

wherein he himself hath not bidden us to do the contrary.

N. C. You will endeavour by and by to make me believe the Moon is made of green Cheese. All this discourse tends to prove that we are *Superstitious*, which you know in your Consciences we abhor; and are therefore so averse to your ways, because we judge them Superstitious.

C. You begin to be sagacious and to smell things a far off. The very truth is, I think it is no easie matter to find more *Superstitious* people in the World than your selves. And your Clamours against *Superstition* prove nothing, but that a man may be guilty of some faults, and not know it.

N. C. Phy for shame!

C. You must not think to put me off with words and wry Faces. I will prove you grosly *Superstitious*, or else be converted to you.

N. C. You will not make good your word.

C. Yes, but I will. Tell me, what is *Superstition?*

N. C. I am not well skill'd in Definitions.

C. No, if you were, you would have smelt the foul Beast among you before this time. But your business is, only to get some ugly Words by the end, & then to throw them at every body whom you do not fansie, though they have less to do with them than your selves. We have been taught that *Superstition* is a great Dread lest God should not be pleased, unless we do some things which we need not do, and lest he should be displeased when we do some things in which there is no harm. Which Dread springs (as you very well saw) out of an opinion that such things are good or evil, (and so must be done or must not be done, else God will take it ill) which in truth are meerly indifferent. Or, in shorter, and perhaps plainer, terms, It is *a needless*

Fear in Matters of Religion, which makes a man either not dare to do those things which he hath a liberty to do, or think he must upon pain of Damnation do those things which he may as well let alone.

N. C. What then?

C. What then, do you say? I would have you behold your face in this Glass, and see how wretchedly and superstitiously you look. For you think you must not, for fear of God's Displeasure, use a Form, nor sign a Child with the Cross in Baptism, nor Bow in the House of God, nor go up to the Rails, nay, nor Kneel, nor hear Church Musick, nor uncover your Heads when you enter into a Church, nor call the Lord's-day *Sunday*, nor keep an Holy-day. Nay, it was a long time before you thought it lawful to let your Hair grow below your Ears: All which things we may do, and not displease God at all. On the other side, You imagine you are bound to propagate and spread all your little Opinions, though with the Ruin of Kingdoms; That you are tied to maintain your liberty in indifferent matters, against all the Authority of a King, and to the disturbing a Church: That you must have a Sermon or two on a Fasting-day, or else you fear it is not kept; and two Sermons on the Lord's-day, or else you doubt it is not Sanctified. Nay, some of you (I remember) fansied heretofore, that it was no Sermon, if it were not in the Pulpit. And to such an height is your Superstition grown, that you scarce think a Prayer is acceptable to God, unless it be long. And you are afraid he is not served aright, unless we have a long Prayer before Sermon, after we have been praying a great while for all manner of things. And such a Necessity you seem to lay upon extemporary Prayer, that many well disposed people, who have not that Gift, dare not pray at all, (at least in their Families) for fear they should not pray aright. And all these are things of

of such a nature, as that they may not be done, or done otherwise than you think they must, and God be never the less pleased with us.

N.C. Now you have discovered the Naughtiness of your Heart, in speaking against Sermons in the Afternoon.

C. If I should do so, I should speak against my self, and run into your fault, I think they may be used, or they may be let alone, according as the Edification of the People shall require. But to make them so necessary as you do, arises from a *Superstitious* Fansie that God is not well served without them. Whereas in truth the Catechism expounded, or the Scriptures opened, would be as well, or rather better.

N.C. I doubt there is something that is naught lies at the bottom of such Discourses.

C. You should rather suspect there are naughty things at the bottom of such Opinions as yours. For the Fruit of your Superstition is this at the best; Rash and unjust Censuring of your Brethren, that you do not the things which you make so necessary to be done, or do the things which you make so necessary to be forborn; and at last downright Schism and Separation from them, because you fansie they are out of the way of God.

N.C. I must confess I have some fear you are so; who can be content without a Sermon in the Afternoon, and satisfied with Common-Prayer; which I could never feel my self so affected with, as I am with extemporary Devotions.

C. That's because you had so low an esteem of it, and therefore brought no desires, nor used any Endeavours to be moved by it: but rather you set your self in a dull and sleepy Posture, as one that had no list to hear it. I could tell you something else besides this, but it would only vex you.

N.C. I am not afraid of any thing you can ſay. Pray ſpeak your mind.

C. I believe if you would examine your ſelf, you would find there is *ſome part* of your Miniſters extemporary Prayers, which do no more affect you than our Service.

N.C. What part ſhould that be?

C. The Entrance or Beginning of his Prayer: When he ſpeaks very ſlow, as if he was ſtudying what to ſay, and draws out his words with a low Voice, and with a ſmall degree of Vehemence, and little or no Motion; then I ſay, I believe your Affections are low too, and you feel not your heart much moved. But when his Voice begins to riſe, (eſpecially, if he lift it up on a ſudden, and it break out like a Clap of Thunder) and when he ſpeaks more fluently, and his Zeal begins to kindle, and he lays about him, and is full of life (as you call it) that is, uſes a great deal of Action; then is the time, if the truth were known; that your Affections ſtir, and begin to riſe from the bottom of your Heart, where they lay heavy and dull before. Then you ſigh and groan, and perhaps weep, and are put into many Paſſions, which lay quiet enough till his Breath blew lowder. Is not this the plain truth?

N. C. What then?

C. Then you are no more affected with the Prayers of your Miniſter, (as they are pious Petitions or Acknowledgments of God) than you are with our Common-Prayer; But only with the Voice, the Vehemency, the Action, the pretty Fancies and fine Phraſes, which perhaps he lights upon when he is a little heated; which were it my caſe, 'twould make me ſuſpect the Love of God was not in me. For why ſhould he think he loves God, who is not moved with Affection to him when he hears his Greatneſs, Goodneſs, Wiſdom, and Benefits to

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us, ſoberly and gravely expreſſed, but is in a great Commotion when he meets with a new Word that pleaſes him, or a kind Phraſe, or melting Tone, a ſweet Voice, or ſome ſuch thing?

N.C. I hope it is ſomething elſe that affects me.

C. If it be, then pray tell me, why ſhould not the Common-Prayer affect you, whoſe ſenſe is good enough, only it is not varied and dreſſed up in new words every day? I beſeech you try your Heart, by examining the Book, and conſidering whether thoſe very things be not requeſted of God there, which you deſire in your Prayers: and if they be, then demand of your ſelf a Reaſon why they move you no more. I doubt you will find it is becauſe they are not new, but old Expreſſions.

N.C. I will conſider of it at leiſure.

C. To help you a little take this a long with you; which will go near to convince you, that if it be not the Voice and Tone, it is the Novelty which affects you. Suppoſe one of the Prayers of your own Miniſters, which you think is indicted by the Spirit, was taken in ſhort-hand writing, and afterward uſed every day in the Service of God, as often as our Prayers are. Tell me ſeriouſly, do you not think it would ſeem very flat at laſt, fuller of nauceous Repetitions and faulty Expreſſions than you conceive to be in the Common-Prayer?

N.C. You put a hard Queſtion to me.

C. I ſee you are inclined to be of my mind; and therefore pray conſider theſe two things. *Firſt*, That ſince even a Prayer which you think ſo heavenly would not affect you alway, if it were alway uſed; it is to be feared you are moved only while Prayers are new, and indeed becauſe they are new, not becauſe they are good and pious Petitions. And *Secondly*, that ſince it is convenient, if not neceſſary, to have a Form of Prayer

in the Church, and the Common-Prayer hath no other Imperfection but what those whom you so much admire would have, were they constantly used, as it is; why should you not like it as well as any, especially since it is established by publick Authority?

N. C. I will consider of it, as I said before. But I wish you had seen a Book (as I perceive you have many of ours) newly come out, which supposes *your Service-Book hath been abused to Superstition and Idolatry*, and therefore must be aboliſh'd.

C. He doth well to suppose it, and not to undertake the proof of it. What is the name of the Book?

N. C. Nebuſhtan.

C. I have had a short sight of it, as it creeps up and down privately.

N. C. What do you think of it.

C. I will tell you first what I think of you.

N. C. Why what is the matter.

C. You seem to be in a most dangerous condition; for you are infected, as I told you, already with the extravagant Fancies of a number of other Sects, with whom you are blended. And in all likelihood you will have such new Inventions, or rather Frenzies, every year, as will at last destroy your selves as well as us. Some of your Ministers, for instance, acknowledge that the Liturgy is lawful to be used, and can read it themselves. Others there are that think it lawful, but not convenient for men of their Parts and Gifts, whose Ministry (which it seems is of great Necessity and Benefit) they conceive would be thereby rendred less useful. Then there is a third sort who are gone farther and doubt of its Lawfulness. So that they dare not be present at it, though they are content others should, who think it lawful. And now here is a man thinks nobody ought to hear it, nor be suffered

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to use such a Form of Worship; but though the Magistrate ought to tolerate you, yet he ought not to tolerate us. For he saith, It is his Duty utterly to extirpate the Liturgy, as well as the Ceremonies. And every *one of you in your places ought to do your parts towards the abolishing of it; and not sit still in the midst of such Defilements and Snares, but discover your hatred of them, decline their use, and in such ways as Prudence, Justice and Order do allow, Endeavour the rooting of them out.* Whether you will go next, God only knows. And God help the poor Children of the Church of *England*, who when all so boldly challenge Liberty and Toleration, must be the only Persons excluded from this Favour, and, according to this Gentleman, be denied the use of the Common-Prayer, when every body else may pray what he list.

N. C. You must be content, if he have *Evinced* (as he tells us he hath, in his Title page) *That the Liturgy, Ceremonies, and other things used at this day in the Church of* England, *ought neither to be imposed nor retained, but utterly extirpated and laid aside.* And he pretends in his Epistle to have said more in this Argument than ever was said before.

C. He doth so, and imagins he can wield an old rotten Engine, that hath been long laid aside, better than former Workmen, who were but Bunglers in compare with this Artist. For he doubts not to manage it so as to throw down the whole Fabrick of the *English* Church.

N. C. What Engine do you mean?

C. It is this Principle, *That it is the Will and pleasure of God, that such things as have been abused and polluted in Superstitious and Idolatrous Services should be abolished and laid aside.* (Page 15.) Which I observe he contracts into these words, (page 21.) *It is Gods*

will

will that things abused in corrupt and false Worship should be laid aside.

N. C. And what have you to say to it?

C. I will first tell you what he says to it, After he had told us a great many things (which every body knows) concerning the will of God that the *Israelites* should abolish the Images and Groves and Altars of the *Canaanites*, &c. and thence concluded, that *such things* as have been imployed to corrupt ends and purposes must be abolished: at last he comes and tells us, that this principle must not be extended too far, nor made to serve against *all things* that have been so abused, and he excepts a great number. Nothing Commanded by God must be disused upon this account; none of Gods Creatures are to be refused; nay, no necessary and profitable Devises of men need be sent packing, though they have been so profan'd, and more than this, he says that things which are but in a competent degree useful, may be retain'd, if they have been abused to Idolatry only in a slight manner; that is, a little while. Nay, things that have been more grosly abused, in case there be no danger for the future of their being imploy'd, to Idolatry, he is content should be spar'd, and used either to Civil or Religious purposes. Now let any man, that can be Master of coherent Thoughts but for one Minute, tell me, if this be not as much as to say his Principle is not true; and that things are not to be rejected meerly upon this account, that they have been imployed in false Worship, but there must be some other reason for it. For if there be so many things as he confesses, that may be abused; and yet may, nay some ought to be still used in God's Service, then the abuse is not a sufficient reason for our throwing them away utterly, but there must be some other which makes it necessary. And if he had told us that reason plainly, and spent his Discourse in making

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it good; he had done like a man. But he saw (it's like) that this would not have done his business, for it would not for instance, have reached to the taking away of Common-Prayer; because it may be still *useful*, as much (sure) as his *Pen*, *which*, he tells us, *must not be thrown away*, *if any man be so foolish as to bow down to it and Worship it*, (pag. 130.) And as *necessary* I should think, as the *Water-Pots* in *Cana* of *Galilee*, which he confesses our Saviour used, *though abused to Superstition and unlawful Purifications*, And it is in no danger to be imploy'd to Idolatry, for the Papists hate it; and I hope he hath no thoughts that we ever intend to say these Prayers to Saints or Angels, any more than *to bow to a Saint or Angel standing for a Sign at an Inn-keeper's door:* And yet that is no such Profanation of the Sign in his judgment, but that the owner may let it stand unless it become customary to bow to it.

N.C. Well. Is not the Gentleman to be commended for his Honesty, in not concealing this from his Readers, that his Proposition or Doctrine is not to be understood universally?

C. He durst do no otherwise. For if *by things abused which must be abolished*, he had understood *all things abused*, then he saw the *Lord's-day* would be antiquated, the *Sacrament of the Lord's* Supper laid aside, nay, *he himself* put out of his Ministry: the Christian Priests or Ministers having so much served Idols as he supposes, But since his Doctrine was to be limited, why was he not so honest as to do it at first; that so no Reader might be abused, who perhaps would not go so far as to come to his Limitations? Why did he not say, *some things abused* must be lay'd aside, and in some Case; for that's the sense of his Proposition? To make it plainer what I mean, I say, (mark it I pray you) by *things abused*, he understands only

some

some things; and when he says they *must be laid aside*, he means *in some Cases* they must be lay'd aside; as appears by his Exceptions afterwards. And therefore he had done sincerely, if he had drawn up his Proposition thus, (and it had been agreeable to his Text, 2 *Kings* 18. 4.) *Some things abused*, &c. *are in some cases to be laid aside*. But, I conceive he saw that this would not so well serve his purpose; which was, to put people out of conceit with the Common-Prayer and Ceremonies as much as ever he could. For the Doctrine would not have been so popular, nor so easie to declaim upon. It would have put him to a great deal of pains, to *specifie the things* that must of necessity be destroy'd, and then he must have undertaken an harder Task, *to name the Cases* wherein those things, that might otherwise be spared, must needs be abolish'd; and another harder than that, to shew that, because some particular things were abolish'd at one time, none of the like kind must ever be used. And then he must have proceeded to shew, (which ought to have made the Principle part of his Book, but now in a manner is taken for granted) that the Liturgy is in the number of those things that have been so abused; and that the case is so, that it cannot be tolerated, but must be destroyed by the *King*, as the Brazen Serpent was by *Hezekiah*. Which would have proved the most difficult labour of all. For supposing it had been ever imploy'd to Idolatry, (which can never be proved;) yet since *Hezekiah*, in all likelihood, would never have destroy'd such a Monument of God's mercies as the Brazen Serpent, had the people of a long time ceased to burn Incense to it, and been in no danger to do so again; why should we throw away the Liturgy, now that it is not abused to any Idolatrous purpose, nor in any likelihood so

to

to be? Besides, it cannot be so abolish'd as the Brazen Serpent was, but the very same Form may be brought forth again upon occasion. And therefore, any likelihood that may be fansied of its being used to Idolatry in future times can be of no consideration here, because it may be so used whether we lay it aside or no.

All these things considered, he very wisely waved this Method; and only tells the people in *general* terms, that *Things* abused in false Worship must be laid aside: Under which he knew the *Liturgy* and *Ceremonies* would be concluded by them, without any more a-do. For though his Instances or Proofs be all *particular*, and therefore he saw well enough his Proposition ought to have been so; yet the people he knew might not see it, but presently conclude, The *Liturgy* must be packt away among the things abused. And though he makes limitations and restrictions of this Proposition, to shew, it is not Universal; yet they come a great way behind. And, before there is any certainty what the *abused things* are, which must be laid aside; the Magistrate is told his Duty, and earnestly pressed to remove them: The people also are instructed in theirs; who, he saith, are all concerned in one respect or other, as you may see *Sect.* 7. Then he spends another Section to shew the manner how it must be done; and another, about the *time*; declaring, they must *forthwith lay their hand to the work*, even before they knew what they had to do, (for the time was not come to tell them that.) And then another follows, to give the *Reasons* of the Point: Wherein *these things* are Represented as so odious and loathsom to God, that you may well think the *Liturgy* might be condemned to the Flames by the Reader, before he came to consider whether it was not an excepted

thing;

thing; and he might be in such a flame to see execution done *forthwith*; as not to have patience to deliberate whether he ought to save it or no. Nor is the matter much mended when he comes to his Cautions: for, lest it should happen to be acquitted or reprieved, he doth not so much as bring it to a trial, much less bid his Readers take heed of passing rash judgment, without examining whether it were guilty of the aforesaid Crime or no; but fairly leaves it to take its chance, and to stand or fall in their opinion as it should happen. And therefore he did wisely intimate in the beginning of that Section, that it must be left to the Reader to compare his Cautions with what he had said; for there is not one in twenty that will take that pains, and fewer that are able to do it to any purpose, without some assistance. In short, as far as I can judge, (for God only knows the Heart) he saw it was his best way to let his Restrictions alone till the last, and to propound his Doctrine in round and general words, because he knew the people would more readily swallow it: Whereas if it had been broken into parts, some of which were to be taken, and some left; they might prove more nice, when they saw there was a scrupulous difference to be made. But that we may see what force there is in his Principle to do such feats as he imagines, I pray, if you can, resolve me one thing.

N. C. What's that?

C. Whether a *Roman Priest* being truly converted (as far as we can judge) may not be made an *English Minister*.

N. C. Yes, surely: What should hinder?

C. I will shew you clearly that it must not be, according to his way of Reasoning. He tells you (*pag.*21.) that Things abused in false Worship must be laid aside; Then (*pag.*44.) he tells you, that under the word

Things

Things he comprehends *Persons*. And lastly, (*pag.* 49.) he affirms the Papists to be no better than Idolaters. Now shew me how any Popish Priest, who in his language, is a thing abused (so notoriously) in Superstitious and Idolatrous Worship, may ever be made use of more in the Service of God; especially when you consider what a possibility there is, that he may be Serviceable in the false Worship again. For my part, I think, according to his Principles, that he ought not only to be laid aside, but to be kill'd.

N. C. God forbid.

C. Read his *third Section* at your leisure, and tell me what you think of it. For it's like you have such Books among you, though we see them but by chance.

N. C. I have it not, nor know when I shall see it. Pray tell me briefly what he says.

C. He tells you, that *God is so Impatient of grosse and open Idolatry, and of such as are guilty of it, that he every where breaths forth Death against them.*

N. C. You have told me enough.

C. Nay, since you have put me upon it, you shall have a little more. *God peremptorily decrees*, he says, *that whosoever pleads for Idols, offers to them, or performs them any service, shall not only be look'd on as unfit to approach him, but also lose his life.*

N. C. Since you would not leave off when I would have had you, I will be even with you, and require his reason for this Assertion. Doth he bring any place of Scripture that contains so Universal a Decree, that *Whosoever he is that pleads*, &c.

C. No: You know his way is, to make his Proposition *Universal*, and his Proofs *Particular*. He brings you above half a score Texts out of the Scripture, which speak of the execution that was to be done upon the *seven Nations* of *Canaan*, or the *Apostate-Israelites* and the *Priests of Baal*;

and

and leaves you to be ſo kind as to ſuppoſe, (though he go not about to prove it) that God hath decreed the like againſt all Idolaters whatſoever. And then at laſt he thus concludes; *How far this concerns the Papiſts, the knowledg of their ways and practice will inform us. That they are Idolaters, the beſt Proteſtant writers affirm. And it will not relieve them to alledge that they worſhip the true God, for ſo did the* Iſraelites *when they worſhipped the Calf, yet no body queſtions but they were guilty of Idolatry.* I wonder, he did not add, from what went before, *And you very well know*, Moſes *ordered them to be ſlain.*

N. C. I muſt confeſs his Diſcourſe ought to have ended ſo, if it be as you relate. And as I do not like it upon that account, ſo there's another thing that makes me think, he is out of the way. There are many that ſcruple to call the place of your Aſſemblies a *Church*, and yet they would not have them pull'd down, (as they muſt be by theſe Principles,) they being convenient Places to meet in for the Service of God. And for my part, I would have the Cathedrals ſtand, if it were but to be an ornament to the Nation; though I plainly ſee, his Engine, as you call it, will throw them all down, if we ſuffer it to go to work.

G. He ſaw this as well as you, and therein could not but diſcern, his Principle was bad, becauſe it proved more than he would have it. And therefore perceiving how it undermin'd the Foundation of all our Churches, (except ſome few lately built) and being loth ſuch goodly Fabricks ſhould tumble down, nay all the ſtatelieſt Buildings in *Europe* be laid in the *duſt*; he, in great compaſſion quits his Principle, that he might ſupport them. For he tells you, that thoſe only are to be thrown down which in reſpect of their *Situation and Figure or the like, are unfit for profitable Uſes, and ſuch as remain deck'd with their Idols-Attire*;

and

and stand among such people as are scandaliz'd with the use of them, and are in such places where there is danger of their return to Idolatry; which a man half-blind sees is as much as to say, They are not to be laid aside because they have been imploy'd to Idolatry, but for other considerations. He himself confesses as much, when he saith, *If they be, in regard of their Situation and Figure, and the like, fit for profitable Uses, &c. they may lawfully be retain'd.* That is, as if he had said, There is no necessity of laying them aside, because they were abused in false Worship; and therefore my Principle is not true which I laid down at the beginning, that *Things abused in false worship must be abolished.* Are you not amazed that he should be thus forced to forsake his Principle, and yet not mend it? Nay, as if he would demonstrate that men are carried by Humour and Prejudice when they talk of these matters, after all this, he would have *Cathedrals* pull'd down, as the *High places* were.

N.C. Why? What difference is there?

C. For any thing I can see there is none, but they have all the qualifications he mentioned to deserve his Favour. Neither the Situation nor their Figure hinders but they may be fit for profitable Uses. I never saw any Idol's-attire with which they are adorn'd; nor do they stand among those who are scandaliz'd at them, unless it be such as himself, (and some other humorsome people) who first take Offence at them without any reason, and then make this serve for a Reason why they should be pull'd down.

N.C. No doubt he hath some Reason.

C. If he have, he concealed it, or it must lye in their Figure and Situation rendring them unfit for profitable Uses, or in their remaining deck'd with their Idols Attire: From none of which can there be

any thing alledged more against the Cathedrals than against other Churches; nor so much neither, in some regards. For they may be made to serve many more profitable uses than a small Church. But if his people's being offended at them, no body knows why, nor wherefore, must stand alone for a Reason; then mark unto what a fine pass he hath brought his business. He hath quitted his ground in this particular to no purpose, and done the Churches, he thought to save, no service at all; for he holds fast one Fancy which will not let them stand.

N. C. What is it?

C. I have told it you already; *that if they stand among such as are scandaliz'd at them, they ought not to be retain'd.* Alas poor Churches! To what purpose was all this care to keep them from Ruine? The *Quakers* and many other people are extremely offended at them, and could be content, with a *Gothish* Barbarism to demolish them. Or if they were not, we know not when the Conceit will take men to be scandaliz'd; and then they must be converted into Stables or Cow-houses, or what they please; or rather pull'd down, for fear they be converted to Churches again. And truly when I consider all things, I wonder they were not long ago destroy'd upon this very score.

N. C. When were they in danger: I pray you?

C. Upon a Petition of the Assembly of Divines, *July* 19. there was an Ordinance (I remember) of 28. *Aug.* 1643. requiring that *all Monuments of Superstition and Idolatry should be demolish'd*; which was repeated again, to make sure work, *May* 9. 1644. Now, why Churches were not mention'd is hard to tell, for they were dedicated to the honour of some Saint or other at the first; And to those Saints there was then such an Abhorrence, that as they would not let their Images or

Pictures

Pictures stand, so, it should seem, their Coats of Arms, if they had any, were to be defaced. For thus a Proviso at the latter end runs: *This Ordinance shall not extend to the taking down the Image, or Picture, or Coat of Arms, set up for any dead man, who was not commonly reputed a Saint.* It seems they concluded, that none of the reputed Saints in their days would be thought so hereafter (for then no Picture or Image at all should have been allow'd, for fear of being worshipped) and their words suppose, that any of those (either Image, Picture, or Coat of Arms) belonging to any ancient reputed Saints must not stand. The Churches therefore that bore their Names, and were better *Monuments* and remembrances of them than any Coat of Arms, had good fortune they were not beaten down.

N.C. They had so: But they were fit still for Use, and so were not Images and Pictures.

C. Yet those in the Glass-windows were fit enough, and served still for the same use they had done before, where they had the wit to turn their Heels upward.

N.C. It is like, some had no mind to take any notice of them, but were rather well-pleased to pass them by.

C. Perhaps so: For men can pass things by, or take but little notice of them, when they list; though they concern them very much: Of which we have an instance in this very Writer. For being to treat of things abused, first he tells us of *Persons*, than of *Names*, next of *Times*, and after that of *Places* which have been imploy'd to Superstitious or Idolatrous Uses. And of each of these he discourses in a section by it self. Would not any man have expected now to find one Section on purpose about *Books* that have been so abused? Especially since his greatest Spite is at the Litur-

gy, and it is the prime thing he undertook to overthrow? And yet he thrusts this thing into a Corner, as some did their Glass-windows heretofore, not being desirous to meddle much with it, nor having much to say in this matter. I mean, he crouds it in among many other things, at the end of that Section about *abused Places*; and there you find it under the Name of such *Utensils* as have been devoted to Superstitious Uses, which are *Altars, Images, Books, Reliques, Vessels, and other Instruments that have been imployed in that manner.* Now mark, I pray you, in what general terms he speaks of all these together, (for you must not expect to have them distinctly handled:) *Though in themselves* (saith he) *they are never so innocent, rich, and splendid; yet when once they have been Serviceable to such Wickedness, He would have them cast away, as things unfit to be retained by those that profess His Name.* Would you look now to find any limitation of this, and to hear, That things fit for God's Service may be retain'd? And yet in this very Section he allows this favour to *Places*; and there is the same reason, *Books* should enjoy it. And would you not expect a clear Proof of this, that even Innocent things must be destroy'd, (and particularly Books imploy'd in Idol-worship?) especially since he pretends to justifie his Assertion by Scripture, and saith, *This appears by divers express Precepts which he gave the* Israelites *to this purpose?*

N. C. Yes, indeed, should I; and, I suppose, he produces them.

C. Read but *pag.* 75. and try if you find a Syllable spoken to the *Israelites* about *Books*, or about *innocent things* either. I can see nothing but what concerns their Altars, Images, and Pictures. He tells you, indeed, that whole Cities in *Canaan*, and every thing in them

them were to be destroy'd. But he would not take notice, at the same time, that this was only commanded concerning that Countrey; and that there is no proof can be made, that there were any innocent Books there imployed in their Idol-worship. No, we conclude rather all were Superstitious and Idolatrous in themselves, and such as could never be imploy'd in Divine Service. It is true, at last he comes to remember us, that in the New Testament we read, The Christian Converts burnt their *Curious Books*, *Act.* 19.19. But what is this to the Precepts he promised to shew us given to the *Israelites?* And what is this to the business of Prayer-Books? Nay, why did he not shew us the Innocence of these Books, and prove that Conjuring was a very harmless Art?

N. C. I wish you would have done with this Book of his, which I think in one sense is innocent enough, and will do no harm among considering-people.

C. I am content to make an end; for I fear I have been too tedious. But it was out of a desire to examine seriously whether there were such force as he conceives in this Engine, *to batter down all the Fortifications that they who preside in the Church, or their Assistants, can erect, in defence of the abused scandalous things* (as he calls them) *which with so much zeal we contend for*, viz. *the* Liturgy *and* Ceremonies. They are his words in his Epistle.

N. C. He tells you a little after, that he will not offer to impose his belief on others. Let every body read, and then do as he finds cause.

C. I commend his Ingenuity and Modesty, only I wish his Zeal was a little less in this matter, and that he would not think himself and others ingag'd to endeavour to the utmost of their power the Extirpation and abolishing of the Liturgy. For what is this, but to im-

pose his belief upon us, as much as he is able, in his place? Doth he only offer his Reasons, who solicites and perswades and intreats men to promote his Design? Doth he leave others to judge, who ingages their Affections, and stirs up their Passions, as if the Cause were already decided according to his mind? This it is to be zealous to advance a private Opinion. He meant, it's like, as he spoke, when he told us in his Epistle, that *he expected and desired no more but that we would candidly weigh the case:* but his zeal made him forget himself, and earnestly beseech us to be up and doing, as if judgement were already given on his side. This I make no doubt, was the thing that put him so much beside the Cushion, as to make him magnifie the Purity of those Doctrines, which in sober thoughts, he saw were of pernicious consequence. And I would willingly think, it was nothing else that made him only pass his word, that the Liturgy is one of the things that God would have laid aside, without any Proof of it: For whatsoever he or the Assembly have been pleased to say, no body ever *made an Idol of it*, or were guilty of *adoring it*. These are but a kind of Conjuring Phrases and Magical words, which make a great Sound, and astonish the silly people, but signifie nothing, save only this, that men care not what they say to serve their cause. And therefore I hope you will not be affrighted by such Bug-bears, but come and do your Duty to God and man both together, in joyning with us in *Common-Prayer*.

N. C. I will consider it, as I have told you more than once: But I have had the less mind to come to it, because, after it is done, your Minister prays so coldly himself.

C. That is, he doth not put himself into a Sweat. But are not his words lively, and apt to warm the Hearts of those who attend to them?

N. C. Mo-

N. C. Methinks, not. And beside, his Sermons that follow are very dull, and nothing comparable to ours.

C. Now you are got again to the Hole from whence I did drive you a good while ago: you run in a Circle of discourse, and are returned thither where we first began. But since I have followed your motions thus far, I will ask you this question; Why do you not rather think your self dull, than him?

N. C. Because I am not dull in other places, and yet was so at your Church.

C. You may be in the fault for all that. For perhaps you was dis-affected to his Person, or to his Method of handling things; or you had a greater Kindness for some other; and then, though *S. Paul* himself should preach, you would be apt to prefer that man before him.

N. C. No; methinks his matter is dull and flat.

C. Why, what did you hear him treat of?

N. C. I heard him preach about the necessity of Obedience to the Laws of Christ. And there he told us how we must do as we would be done unto, and love our Neighbours as our selves, and forgive injuries, and make Restitution of ill-gotten Goods; with a great many other such like things, which every body knows already. And yet he spent I know not well how many Sermons about these common matters.

C. Does every body know these things, say you? The greater shame then, that they live not according to them. I am afraid they are not sensible of the necessity of these things, about which a man of any understanding and seriousness cannot well speak, and be flat and dull. I much suspect that you even set your self to sleep, or suffered your thoughts to run to other matter, or fell a reading in your Bible, (as I have

seem some do) when he begun to treat of such Arguments as these, thinking that you was little concern'd in them.

N. C. I must confess part of what you say. For when I come to Church, I look not for Moral, but Christian Doctrines.

C. How now? Do you oppose Morality and Christianity? Is not the former a part of the latter? I mean; Doth not the Christian Religion teach us the highest Morality?

N. C. No, I think it doth not meddle with it.

C. Then you talk of this, as you do of many other things, without understanding. Pray, what is Moral Doctrine?

N. C. Do you tell me, if you please.

C. I always took it to be that Doctrine which teaches us how to regulate our manners, that is, to order and govern our actions, or our whole Behaviour in this World. Now I appeal to any man that reads the Gospel, whether this be not the very design of it, to teach us to *live soberly, righteously, and godlily.*

N. C. Is this Morality?

C. Yes, that it is. And therefore I said that Christian Religion advances Morality to the greatest height; because it gives us the best and most excellent Motives to live soberly, righteously, charitably, and piously in this World.

N. C. For all this, I think it were better if *Jesus Christ* were more preached.

C. Still I see, you deceive your self, and trouble the world with Phrases. Doth not he preach *Jesus Christ* that preaches his Doctrine? If you doubt of it, you shall have Scripture enough to prove it.

N. C. But I mean, that the Love of *Jesus Christ* to poor Souls should be more preached.

C. I can-

C. I cannot say, it should be more preached; but it ought to be preached, and so it is; and perhaps better than you would have it. For, his Love is declared, to the end we may love him and keep his Commandments. This is that which the Grace of God teaches us, To live soberly, &c. The Loving-kindness of God towards mankind, in *Christ Jesus*, was expressed for this very purpose. And therefore he that preaches both these together is the best and wisest Guide with whom to entrust our Souls; and that is the design of our Minister. He doth not tickle us meerly with a soft Story of the great love of *Jesus Christ* towards Sinners; but labours to beget in us an ardent love to him, And lest we should run away with a pleasant Fancy, he makes us understand wherein this love consists, *viz.* In Obedience to him to the very death; in Meekness, Humility, Patience, taking up the Cross, and such like Graces; which seem to be rough things, and have no amiableness in the eye of the World, but are as dear to all those who love our Saviour, as their very Lives. And this makes me think him the more sincere and honest, that he doth not seek so much to please us in his Preaching, as to profit us.

N. C. Profit, Do you call it? I could never profit by him at all.

C. Whose fault was that? Yours, or his? You are loth to suspect your self, and inclin'd to lay all the load on others. I believe it will be found at the great Day that he hath done his duty better than you.

N. C. That's a thing, which neither you nor I know. But this I am sure of, that I can profit more by others, than by him.

C. Let me try the truth of that, if you please; for I very much doubt of it.

N. C. I am sure of it,

C. If

C. If you profit so much, then your Ministers make you *wiser* and *better* than you were before: For there are but these two things that argue Proficiency. Now do as much as answer me the *first*. Wherein are you *wiser* than you were? What one thing do you know, that you did not understand before, or might have understood easily, when you pleased? What things do you now understand the Reason of better than formerly? Or what account can you give me of the grounds of Christian-Faith, and of the Hope that is in you? What Rules of Prudence have you met with-all? What explication of Scripture? I was going to ask, What Point in Divinity you are able to state with Judgement and due Caution? But that's too hard a Question.

N.C. I am not able presently to call things to mind. But this I am sure of, that I get more good by them, than any men that ever I heard.

C. That is, you are grown better: Wherein, I beseech you? Are your carnal affections more mortified? Are your Passions more subdued to Reason? Are you more humble and lowly in heart? More meek, more merciful, more compassionate to all men, more affable, more courteous? I am afraid in this last Point you are grown better as *sowr Ale doth in Summer*; that is more sharp and eager.

N.C. Methinks I have much more Comfort.

C. That's strange, when you are neither wiser nor better, as far as I can discern. One would think you should suspect them to be foolish and deceitful Comforts, because they have so little ground, except it be in your Imagination.

N.C. Why? Would you have me fetch my Comforts from my self, and not from *Jesus Christ?*

C. Now

C. Now I see indeed how wise you are grown by this profound Question.

N. C. Must not all our Comfort be fetch'd from *Jesus Christ?*

C. Yes: But every body cannot fetch it. They are the weary and heavy laden, and such as take upon them his Yoke and Burthen, *i. e.* submit to his Commands, whom he invites, and promises ease and Refreshment unto. By which you may see, if you will, that we must feel something that is good in our selves, (and more than good Desires, and Affections and Purposes) before we can feel that solid Comfort and Satisfaction you speak of.

N. C. Then it seems, we must fetch our comfort from our own selves.

C. But it seems you are grown so wise, and taken up in such high Notions, that you cannot understand common Sense. Is there any other comfort you dare give to an ungodly man besides this, that he may, by the Grace of our Lord, be made better, and so received into his Favour?

N. C. I think not.

C. Then before you can take that full Comfort in him which you talk of, you must feel that you are truly changed and converted to a love of Godliness, and a Life according to those good Affections. All the good, indeed, that is in us, all that we hope for, we derive from our Saviour Christ: but till we become good, and be made like him, we do but put our selves into a Fool's Paradise, if we fancy that we are in his Favour, and that he will carry us to Heaven. And on the contrary, when we are once made partakers of his blessed Nature and Spirit, how can we chuse but be full of Joy, both in that Resemblance we find in our selves to him, and much more in the hopes

Hopes he hath given us, that he will perfect those Beginnings in eternal Life? But it is as plain, that though we cannot but rejoyce very much in that which we feel in our selves, (the Likeness of *Christ* and good Hopes) yet the Original of this Joy and Satisfaction is not from our selves, but Him, who gave us that Participation of his nature and those good Hopes.

N. C. I do not well understand you. But this I know, that you all talk as if we were *to bring something to* Christ, *and not to take all from him.*

C. Rather to talk thus is to be very ridiculous. For he invites us to come to him, *i. e.* to believe on him, and become his Disciples and Followers. And this we must do, or else be disown'd by him; though when we do it, we only obey his heavenly Call, and bring him nothing, but only all our Desires and Affections to be govern'd by him. Is there any body so absurd, as to imagine we must not give up our selves to be led and guided by him in his ways? And when we are in them, does any body think we came there without his Motion and gracious Attraction? Would you have us without any more a-do conclude, that all the promised blessings are our portion? Or, must we not first be perswaded our Saviour tells us the truth of God, and then purpose to learn of him and obey him, and next set our selves with all our might to subdue every Thought and Passion to his obedience, and last of all, order all our actions (by the Assistance of the same Grace whereby we do the rest) according to the Rule of his Laws? And must we not have a sense that we are sincere in all this, before we can reasonably expect that he should give us all the good things he promises? In short, Must he not give us his Grace to will and to do, and must we not receive

ceive it, and effectually do thereby all that I have said, before we conclude our Sins are pardoned, and take the confidence to hope our Saviour will give us Eternal Life?

N. C. I perceive you pretend to have profited very much by your Minister.

C. Yes indeed: I think, I am grown wiser a great deal and much better.

N. C. I wish, you would tell me briefly Wherein.

C. I know God and his Attributes better, and perceive how all Religion depends on that Knowledge: I think also, I understand the nature of Religion in General, and of Christianity in particular more exactly, than I did. I know wherein Religion consists; with the grounds of Faith, and the Reason why I am a Christian rather, than of any other Profession. And withal, I hope I understand many places of Holy Scripture, and am able to give a clearer and soberer account of them than heretofore; when as I ingeniously confess, I was wont to expound the Word of God by fansie, and not by serious and attentive Considerations. And as for growth in goodness, I may truly say, I have learnt many things to be my Duty, which I scarce ever heard you speak of. As for example, to bridle my Tongue; especially when I speak of my Superiors; to reverence my Governors; to live in obedience to Laws, though they happen to hinder my private profit; and for that end to look upon humane Laws, as binding the Conscience; to answer my Betters with great Modesty and Humility: In particular, not to contend boldly and malepertly with the Priest, as if I were upon equal ground with him; not to be a Busie-body, and a Gadder from house to house; not to pry into every body's Secrets:

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not to rejoyce in iniquity, or take a pleasure in hearing of the Sins of the contrary party; to be very fearful of making a Schism in the Church; and to name no more, to take heed of itching Ears, and not to run from my own Church, out of a fansie that I can profit more in other places.

N. C. Well, Talk as long as you please, *all the Godly will follow those men* whom you would perswade me to forsake.

C. I am heartily sorry to see your Arrogance and Uncharitablenes. But it gives me to understand, how much you profit by your Ministers; not in the Graces of *Christ*, but in the peculiar unheard of Vertues of your Sect; Pride, Boasting, Good opinion of your selves, Contempt of others, and rash judging even of mens Spiritual estates.

N. C. I think you judge rashly of me.

C. No such matter. Your Censoriousnes and Rashnes is apparent; and I do not commit the same fault, when I take notice of it. And I must let you know, that you commit another like this, when you make an Out-cry through the Nation and tell the people *that all Ungodlines hath over-flown it, only since Bishops and Common-Prayer* came home again. Which is an arrant Lie; as will be made good, if need be, against the best of you. For it began to break in upon us when the Bishops and all good Order was thrown down, and the Kingdom put into Arms. Then men ran into excess of Riot, when there was no Restraint upon them. I will not say into so much Drunkennes, but into Whoring (I may add Atheism and Irreligion) and such like Wickednes, which are said now to be the reigning sins. And though men were not presently openly lascivious and profane (for the older Wickednes grows, the bolder it is;) yet then they got loose from

from their Chains, and these works of Darkness secretly lurk'd, and were privately practised.

N. C. I do not believe you.

C. You will believe the Assembly, I am sure, and they say so.

N. C. Where?

C. In their Petition to the Parliament of *July* 1642. where they desire (in the seventh Branch of it) *that some severe Course may be taken against Fornication, Adultery, and Incest: Which do greatly abound*, say they, ESPECIALLY OF LATE, BY REASON OF IMPUNITY.

N. C. I am not concern'd about this. But I affirm the *Generality of the Godly people* now follow us.

C. Suppose they did; you will not allow it a good Argument in other cases to say that *all the Godly for many Ages* did such and such things, for instance, use a Form of Prayer, and such Ceremonies as ours, and therefore, why do you keep such a stir with it now? But where did you get a List of all the Godly, that you can tell so exactly the major part follow you? Were they ever brought to the Poll? And who were Judges, I pray you, in the Case? You do but still perfist in your over-fond Love to your selves, and your own Party and Way, when you talk in this manner; For there are many ways to shew, that they are far from being the Generality of the Godly that flock to your Meetings.

N. C. Then you allow that some Godly people follow us.

C. Did I ever dispute it? Nay, does there any body doubt (except your selves and the Papists) but that there may be Godly people of every Sect and

and Party? But then it is an imperfect sort of Godliness which we acknowledge in them; and we hope God will bear with their Defects, when they are sincerely humble and modest, and do not fansie themselves the only or the most godly people in the World. And if you will have me speak my mind plainly, and not be angry; I think I may say without any rashness, that your godly people are generally of the lowest Form in *Christ*'s School, as I told you before. A great deal of their Religion is of their own making, (as I lately shew'd you,) and they want a great deal of God's Religion.

N.C. You are very envious.

C. No truly. I admire the Grace of God wherefoever I see it, for it is the most lovely sight that can present it self to me. But I cannot allow them to be such excellent Christians as you imagine: They rather appear to me with many Deformities; For they are ever wrangling about little Ceremonies: They break the Peace of the Church by this means, and seem to make no scruple about it: They are froward and peevish, greedy of Riches, stubborn in their Opinions, and by no means can bear with any man dissering from them in matters of Doctrine. In short I see a strange Ignorance mixt with Presumption and Wilfulness, not without a high degree of Superstition, in those whom you admire for godliness. But then, there is a sort of people who enjoy that name among you, in whom I can see nothing but an humour of Despising and Railing at all ancient received Customs, how good soever; Together with a sullen Devotion, and such a turbulent nature as will give no rest to themselves or others. And they have one peculiar Quality, proper to themselves alone, which is to revile our Ministers even as they go along the streets;

streets: A thing which I could never observe our ungodly people to be guilty of towards your Ministers, who may pass peaceably enough: Nay, I think, is not committed in any Country in the World, where they are of different Religions. Perhaps you will say, that ours would do it, did not the power of the Lord overawe them and shut up their Mouths, that they may not reproach his faithful Servants. But this is only a Cast of your skill in searching the Hearts of men, and gives us a taste of the opinion you have of your dearness to God.

N. C. I doubt not but they are very dear to God; and that God will *reprove even Kings for their sakes*, saying, *Touch not mine anointed, and do my Prophets no harm.*

C. You have a strong Faith. But me-thinks before you suffer it to grow to such a Confidence, you should soberly consider whether some of those precious ones may not be anointed ——, that make godliness a pretence for their Disobedience to Kings, and Sauciness towards their betters; that flatter you into a conceit of your godliness, that you may flatter them with the title of the *Prophets of the Lord*. To me it is no mean argument of their want of Integrity, that they teach you no better, and connive at all this Wickedness, and never (that I could hear of) lay bare, and rebuke these Sins that reign so much among your Party. Tell me, whence came all the scurrilous Pamphlets that are abroad? Out of what Shop do the venemous Libels fly about the Town? Who are they that not only despise our Clergy, but put open affronts on them as they quietly and soberly walk the Streets? That have the Poison of Asps under their Lips? and spit it in good mens faces? That in a fearful manner, scorn and revile their Holy Calling, and

ſalute them every where with the ordinary name of *Baal's Prieſts*? Are they not all bred up in your Churches? Do they not all frequent your Meetings? And do not By-ſtanders of your Perſwaſion laugh and rejoyce when they ſee this Contempt poured on them? Do they not ſeem to encourage thoſe by their Applauſes, who are ſo rude and inſolent in their behaviour toward good men? And yet theſe ſtile themſelves *the godly*, and take it ill, if we do not think them ſo. Theſe you are content to wink at, that your Congregations may be full. Your Miniſters dare not preach down theſe Abuſes; leſt they ſhould be thought to be friends to *Baal*.

N. C. There will be ſome bad people every where.

C. I am glad to hear you ſay ſo. By and by, you will confeſs that there may be alſo *good* people every where, and that ſome of our Miniſters may be good, though your Revilers make no difference, but if they ſee a man in a Caſſock, preſently throw dirt in his face, and call him a Limb of Anti-Chriſt; or ſome ſuch thing. So brutiſh and outragious are the Paſſions of this Heady people. So wonderfully do they profit in your School in thoſe new Vertues of Hatred to ancient Cuſtoms and Habits, though never ſo innocent; and Hatred or Anger to all that are not of their Way. For ſuch is the Fire, I have ſometimes ſeen in their Eyes, when they meet one of our Miniſters, that one would think they had a mind to burn them up. And I make no doubt they would call upon your *Prophets*, if they were but like *Elijah*, to call for Fire down from Heaven to conſume us. You may condemn their Folly perhaps; but whatſoever you are pleaſed to ſay, they are the moſt Zealous of your Party, and think themſelves the moſt Godly. And for any thing I can hear, they may think ſo ſtill. It not being the man-

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ner of your Preaching, to meddle with such things as these; nor the time, I doubt, to be named when you heard a Sermon to reprove the scurrilous and railing language of some among you against the *English* Clergy. No, the way hath been, and I doubt still continues, to declaim only against Superstition, and Formality, and Will-worship, and sometimes against Morality; and then to exhort the people to prize Ordinances, and seek after pure Ordinances, and admit of no humane Mixtures. But whilst the poor people are thus affrighted, and made exceeding timorous lest they should be *righteous overmuch*, by following vain Traditions of men; they have little or no fear wrought in them of being *wicked over-much*, by Schism, and Disobedience, and letting loose their furious Passions and unruly Tongues; by reviling Gods Ministers, nay, by despising Governments, and speaking evil of Dignities.

N. C. I think, they should be taught to fear these things more than they do.

C. I, and they should be taught not to think themselves Godly too soon. Whereas the manner hath been quite contrary, to breed in them an opinion of their Piety, if they be but a praying people, and follow Ordinances, and frequent private meetings. And when they are taught no such easie terms to call themselves *Gracious* and *Godly*, then your Ministers make this an Argument against us, that all or most of the Godly are on their side. And now it comes into my mind, That this was the Pretence wherewith they countenanced the late Rebellion, as now, I suppose, you will give us leave to call it. But to let you see how idle and frivolous such Arguments were, and that they might serve any bodies purpose; it was not long before you were numbred among the ungodly: For the

Army learnt to call themselves the only *godly party*, and in a manner excluded you. Though I believe, You would have lik'd it well enough, if a Painter had drawn a Man with his Eyes lifted up to Heaven, and one hand on his Breast, with the other hand in his Neighbour's Purse, or cutting of his Throat, and writ over it, this Inscription, *An Army-Saint*. I mean, you thought them an ungodly and untoward generation. But whatsoever you thought, the Argument was as plausible and successful for them as it had been and is for you: for the people were strangely drawn away by it. This cut off the King's Head; that it was for the safety of the Godly. This was in a fair way to keep our present Soveraign from returning to us, that those that feared the Lord were against it, and would be undone by it. And I find that to this day, this pretence of Godliness hath left an Impression on some peoples minds, and excuseth all those impieties. For not long since I heard one commending them for *a very gracious people:* and when it was soberly objected, that they were unjust, and even Cruel, and False, and Turbulent, and Disobedient to their Governours, and Troublers of the Nation; it was answered, That notwithstanding all these things, there was more *Grace* among them, than there is to be found nowadays. Meaning, I suppose, by their Grace, that they were *a praying people*, and much *in seeking God*. As if S. *Paul* did not understand himself when he told us, that *the Grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness* and *all Worldly Lusts*, and *to live Soberly*, *Righteously*, and *Godly in the World*. And, to deal freely with you, I am much afraid, there are many of this kind of Godly People whom you associate your selves withal; I am sure, some of those who were Patrons to their wickedness, and allowed, if not justified, the killing of the

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KING, and were Army-Chaplains; and are now private Preachers, and not a little adored.

N. C. Well, no more of this. For I am satisfied we are not the only Godly. But yet I am still inclined to think, there is more of the *Power of Godliness* to be found among us, than any where else.

C. I always thought, The *Power of Godliness* did not consist in words, but in a great measure of Humility, and a great measure of Charity; together with exact Justice and Meekness, and Peaceableness, and purity of Heart. Now, methinks there is not such store of this among you as one would expect; at least, not more than we see in other people.

N. C. Do you call this the *Power of Godliness?*

C. Yes; and so doth the Apostle, as will appear, if you think good that we consider seriously together the Character he gives of those that *deny the Power of Godliness*, and content themselves only with the shew or Image of it, which he calls the *Form of Godliness*.

N. C. With all my heart. For that will be a better way of spending our time, and edifying one another, than the continuing Dispute will be.

C. You say very well, and I love you for that sense of Piety which you discover. Let's take the Book then, and read what S. *Paul* teaches us in 2 *Tim.* 3. 2, 3, 4, &c. concerning them that want the *Power*, and have only the *Form* of Godliness. First, he tells us, they are *Lovers of themselves*, i. e. as I understand it, study above all things, their own Profit, Credit, Honour, and Pleasure. From which (as the Root of wickedness) they grow to be *Covetous*, or *Lovers of Money*; and then *Boasters*, that is, people who magnifie themselves, arrogating to themselves more, than is their due, and bragging, they can do that, which they are not able to perform. From whence it follows

that they are *Proud*, that is, Contemners and Despisers of others; who perhaps are better than themselves: *Blasphemers*, *i. e.* of Magistrates and Dignities, (upon a pretence, perhaps that they have nothing of God in them, or are Anti-Christian: *Disobedient* to their Natural *Parents*, (as some now are, because they say, they are unsanctified and unregenerate people) *Unthankful* to their Benefactors: *Unholy* and impure Wretches, or, as some have expounded it to me, such as make no difference between things Sacred and Prophane: without *Natural Affection*, *viz.* to their Children or Kindred, as well as Parents: *Truce-breakers*, or perfidious people, whom no Bond or Tie can hold to their Promises or Duty: *False accusers*, or such as calumniate, and tell false and devised Stories, to the prejudice of those whom they do not love, or set themselves to oppose: *Incontinent*, which I have been told, signifies such as have no Power over themselves and their Passions, and as are inconsistent with themselves: *Fierce*, that is, Bloody-minded men, and such whom no Kindness, no Benefits can reconcile to Society, Friendship, or Modesty: *Despisers of those who are good*, (*i. e.* that have no Kindness for men who are solidly Good) or, as our Translation seems to take it, such as contemn true Vertue, as a mean thing: *Traitors*, that is, such as will betray their best Friends and Company, for to serve their own Interest: *Heady*, that is, rash, inconsiderate, impudent and bold people; ready for any bad Design: *High-minded*, or men puft up and swoln with an opinion of themselves, of their own Knowledge, suppose, or Piety: *Lovers of Pleasure, more than lovers of God*, or such as pretend to God, only to have a better opportunity to satisfie their desires of pleasures. And in conclusion he tells us, that they were of this number who in those days

days *crept into folks houses*, and insinuated themselves into the Favour of *silly Women*; having a design either upon their Wealth, or their Chastity. And Women they were for the most part; being *led away with divers Lusts, ever learning, and never coming to the knowledg of the truth*; that is, always frequenting Christian Assemblies, but getting no good by them: or else opening their Ears *to every wind of Doctrine*, desiring still to hear some new thing, running from place to place where any novel Teachers were: but remaining just as wise as they were before, and not a whit the better for all the Sermons they heard.

N. C. Me-thinks you have made me a short Sermon; at least I have heard the Doctrinal part of it: would you would come to the Use, and tell me what you gather from hence.

C. I gather two things, and leave you to gather the rest.

N. C. What are they?

C. First, that all this Wickedness which I have described from the Apostle will consist with a *Form* or shew of Godliness. For that's part of the Character of these very men, vers. 5. *having a Form of Godliness*, &c. *Secondly*, I collect from hence, that, those men have the *Power of Godliness* who are of a disposition quite opposite to them now named: *Such*, I mean, *as deny themselves for God's and their Neighbour's sake; that set not their hearts upon getting Riches; that are humble and modest; that reverence their Governours, and study in word and deed to preserve their Authority; that honour their Parents, though not of their Opinion, or perhaps ungodly; that are sensible of Benefits, and grateful to their Benefactors; that study Purity and Chastity; that are kind and tenderly-affected to their Relations; that keep their Faith, and perform their Promises, though to their own damage; that are easily reconciled,*

if they have been grossly injured; that speak well, if they can, of their Neighbours, and are not ready to believe every Story of them: that endeavour to preserve an even Temper: that command their passions: are steady and uniform in their Actions: that are meek and submissive: peaceable and sociable: that love Virtue wherever they see it, and do not despise or reproach it under the name of meer Morality: that are faithful to their Trust: sober, advised, and considerate in their Undertakings: that have no high Opinion of themselves, and love God above all things: that choose rather to keep at home, and mind their own Concerns, than to be prying into the Secrets of their Neighbors Houses: that have no other Design upon any, either Man or Woman, than to make them good: and further their interest in true Wisdom. These, and such like men, in whatsoever place you find them, undoubtedly have *the Power of Godliness*, though they should not talk of it so much, as others.

N. C. I see you are able to preach, if you list.

C. If I should think so, I should run into the company of those *proud* and *high-minded* men, whom I now spake of. I can only repeat a good Sermon to you, which I have heard.

N. C. You would have me preach, or at least make a piece of a Sermon; for you told me, you would leave me to gather the rest from your discourse.

C. It's profitable to Preach to *your self* such things as you read and hear, and to press upon your Heart such Truths, as you cannot but observe plainly follow from them, though they were not named.

N. C. And what do you think I should gather from what I have heard you say?

C. I told you it would be best to leave you to consider what farther Use is to be made of this Character. But if you would have me direct you; then you

may be pleased to consider, when you are alone by your self, whether any part of it belong to those, whom you call Godly, or to those whom we esteem so: or, which is all one, you may consider whether those opposite Qualities, wherein I told you the *Power of Godliness* consists, be to be found most among your, or our Godly. Always carrying this in your mind, that we do not call all them Godly who are of our Party, as you are wont to do. Our Ministers, I assure you, will not allow them to enjoy this name, who are Lovers of themselves, Covetous, Boasters, Proud, False, Fierce, Heady, &c. But whether many such do not pass with you for Godly men, and cry out against the Form of Godliness, while they have little else; I leave you to judge.

N. C. Truly, I thought once that the *Power of Godliness* had consisted in keeping the Sabbath, in repeating Sermons, having a Gift of Prayer, and using it in our Families, treasuring up and communicating Experiences, and meeting together to exercise our Gifts. And, now it comes into my mind on a sudden, this is a thing which hath made me fear you want at least a great deal of the power of Godliness, that you never *keep a Day* together.

C. Strange! I thought on the Contrary, that this had been one of our Accusations; Our keeping too many days.

N. C. Really, I never heard that any of you kept one.

C. What did you never hear, that we have a Holy-day at least once a Month, and sometimes more, which we always observe?

N. C. Pish! I perceive you understand not my Language. I mean, that we keep a private Day together, which we set apart for Prayer, and humbling our selves

selves before God, and hearing the Word.

C. Alass! How should I guess at your meaning! When as I thought you would have kept no Days but that of God's appointing.

N. C. Yes; we can keep other Days, and think we ought, at least that there is much Religion in it.

C. Why then will you not keep those which your Governours appoint? Have you power to appoint Days, and not they? I am sorry to see your partiality, and that you are so full of Humour, as not to do things when you are bidden, and yet to do the same when you are not bidden, nay, when you are forbidden.

N. C. Oh, but we do not keep Days, as you do.

C. What's that to the Purpose? Seeing what we do is good, why should you not joyn with us in it? You pray, and so do we: You read the Scriptures and so do we; You give thanks to God, and that's part of our Business. Only we do it in publick, and you in private; we when our Governors would have us, and you when it pleases your selves.

N. C. We not only pray, but hear a Sermon also, when we keep our Days.

C. So you may at some of our Churches, if you please, every Holy-day. But what a foolish Conceit is this, to think that this makes a Day not to be well observed, if we want a Sermon? This is a piece of the *Superstition* I told you of. For was it not always the chief Design of those Days we observe, to acknowledge God, to praise him in all his wonderful Works, to meditate on his admirable mercy in sending his Son, in giving him to die for us, in raising him from the dead, in sending the Holy-Ghost, and after that the blessed Apostles to preach the Gospel: And is not this

this sufficient work for one Day? Or cannot we meditate upon the holy Scriptures then read, or on the Sermon we heard the Lord's Day before; but we must needs have a new Sermon, or else think God is not glorified, nor well pleased? I am amazed at the gross Absurdity of such Fancies.

N. C. You may be so; but we shall never leave them, nor come to Church, till you have more than Common Prayer on those Days.

C. I cannot understand any Reason for that Resolution. For if you be not satisfied with our Service, but yet must needs have something else; why do you not come to the publick Prayers and Praises first, and then make up their Defects (as you conceive) in your private Meetings? Or why do you not seek and endeavour that these days may be kept more Religiously, seeing publick Praising God is far better than private, and doth him more honour in the World? For my part, I verily think (and I speak it sincerely) that if you would come to Church, and there joyn in the publick Service of God, and then go home, and spend some other part of the Day in Catechising your Children, instructing your Servants, teaching them among other matters, how to use the Liberty you then allow them, discreetly and soberly, and in visiting, inviting or relieving your poor Neighbours; it would be a thing far more acceptable to God, and more for the honour of Christian Religion, and the good of Souls, than a whole day of Prayer and hearing Sermons.

N. C. I am not yet of that mind.

C. Why? look over all the Families you know, and see if many of them be not miserably neglected, whilst their Masters and Mistresses are *loving Days*, as you call it. And then tell me, whether they spend their time to so much Profit

and

and true Comfort as I would have them.

N. C. I think ſome may be too negligent.

C. Why do not your Miniſters chide them, and exhort the good Women to keep more at home, and not under a notion of Religion, neglect their neceſſary Duties? It were eaſie to tell you of ſome who are the worſt Wives, and Mothers, and Miſtreſſes, in the Pariſh, meerly upon this account, that moſt of their time hath been taken up in gadding about to thoſe private Exerciſes. Sometimes you are mightily offended at our Holy-days upon this account, that they take up too much of mens times from their Buſineſs; and yet you can be content to ſee a Day ſet apart every Week, if not oftner, by your ſelves, to the great Damage of many Families. And ſo, when the Fit is upon you, we are told, that Magiſtrates ought not to bind the people to obſerve Days, which is to make that neceſſary which God hath left free: But yet notwithſtanding, you your ſelves ſtick not to lay ſuch a neceſſity upon men of obſerving Days, now and then, as if there were a Divine Commandment for it; for you think they have no Religion, or want the Power of it, that do not. And what a ſtir do you keep to have Lectures on the Week-days; as if we were *dead*, and had but *a Name to live*, unleſs we hear a Sermon or two, then? Whereas very good Chriſtians, perhaps have no more time to ſpare from their honeſt Imployments, than they ought to beſtow in private Prayer and Meditation; digeſting of what they heard the Sunday before; ſearching ſeriouſly into their Conſciences, and conſtant Examination of their Lives and Actions; in conferring with their Miniſters about their Doubts, or thoſe Indiſpoſitions, or, perhaps, ill Inclinations, which they find in their Souls; in comforting the poor and

the Sick; in Endeavouring to reconcile Differences among Neighbours, in consulting how to advance the publick Good either of the City or Town where they live; and discharging the publick Office well, to which they may be called. If after all this done, they can find any leisure to hear a Sermon, who is there that forbids it? We are only afraid, lest whilst the necessity of that is so much urged, things more necessary should be neglected.

N.C. You say a great many notable things; but yet to me you seem *a man of a slight Spirit*, which you betray when you speak of these weighty matters.

C. If you mean that I slight many of those things which you think matters of great weight and moment: I cannot contradict you. But why you should thence conclude, I have a *slight Spirit*, I see no cause: For therefore I slight them, because I have throughly consider'd and examin'd them, and find there is nothing but Fansie or Superstition at the bottom of them. Mistake me not; your honest Affections I do not slight, but the things to which you are so affected. As for instance, you abound in insignificant Phrases, and Scripture-Expressions misapplied: You have a great many Superstitious Conceits and Opinions, and oft-times alledge your Experiences very absurdly -----

N.C. Nay, now you discover your self. Doth not this argue a profane spirit, to *slight Experiences*, when the Apostle mentions Christian Experience as a part of our Rejoycing and Glory? *Rom.* 5. 4.

C. I do not slight *his* Experiences, but *yours*; and not all of *yours* neither. For if by your Experience you meant, that you had made a proof of your Constancy and Faithfulness to *Christ*, by patient enduring of any Affliction for Righteousnes sake; and

and made a Trial also of his Faithfulness, in performing his promises of giving us Strength, Support, and Comfort, (which I conceive is the Apostle's meaning:) I should accuse my self of great Profaneness, should I slight it. But when you will needs give me this word for a proof of a thing, of which I know you have no Experience, and perhaps can have none; and when you alledge your Experience in a matter of Reason, and in effect say no more than this, I pray believe me: you must not take it ill, if I make light of it. As for example: When you will tell us, you find by Experience that you are in the right way; it is a thing that may be entertain'd with a smile. It is in truth no better than to say, you may take my word for it. For whether you be in the right or no, is not to be known by Experience, but by Reason. In like manner, If you tell me, you find by Experience your Minister is a good man, because he doth you good; it is a frivolous Argument, and I may be allow'd to slight it; for it cannot be known by your Experience, what he is. You can only know by your Experience, that you are made better; but he may be bad enough, notwithstanding. As the *Quakers* were reform'd of Cheating and Cousenage in some places by those, who there is great reason to suspect, were cheating knaves themselves.

N. C. But I may know by Experience whether the things he preaches be true or no.

C. It will deceive you, if you rely upon that Proof. For you may have some good done you by false Principles. Nay, those very Principles may make you do some things well, which shall make you do other things ill.

N. C. That's strange.

C. Not

C. Not so strange, as true. For what Principle was it that led the *Quakers* to be just in their dealing?

N. C. That they ought to follow the Light within them.

C. This led them also to be rude and clownish, and disrespectful to Governours. For all is not Reason, that is in us: There is a World of Fansie also: And the Flashes of this now and then are very sudden and amazing; just like Lightning out of a Cloud. By this they find they were mis-led in many things, which they have now forsaken; being content to wear Hatbands and Ribbons too, which they so much at the first abominated.

N. C. I take them to be a deluded people.

C. And yet they are led, they will tell you, by Experience. For they found themselves amended by entring into that Religion, whereas they cheated and cousened in all other Forms wherein they were before. And therefore do not tell me any more of the good you have got by your private meetings, nor make it an Argument of their Lawfulness. For the same Argument will be used against your selves by the *Quakers*, who will tell you, God is in no private Meetings but only theirs, for otherwhere they could never find him. Take your choice: And either let it alone your selves, or else allow it them. It will either serve both, or neither.

N. C. But I have seen you smile, if one bring his Experience to prove the truth of Christian Religion.

C. Yes, and very deservedly: Because the Ground upon which we believe it to be true, cannot be known by Experience; nor is your Experience of any thing in it a Ground for any other man to believe it. You cannot know, for instance, by your Experience, that our Saviour was born of a Virgin, that the Holy Ghost came

came upon him at his Baptism with a Voice from Heaven, saying, *This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.* You cannot know by that means, that he died, that he rose the third day, that he went to Heaven forty days after, and after ten days more gave the Holy Ghost; and that S. *Paul* was struck blind with the Glory of our Saviour, whom he saw and heard, and was sent by him to preach the Gospel.

N. C. Yes, I feel that he and the rest of the Apostles speak the very truth.

C. They say all these things; and do you know them by your feeling? The Apostles indeed, felt, or saw, or heard them; but we cannot do so, nor know them by any other means than their Testimony.

N. C. I feel that their Testimony is true.

C. What? Do you feel that they say true, for instance, when they tell you that our Saviour turn'd Water into Wine, and that he raised *Lazarus* from the dead.

N. C. No, I know these things otherways.

C. Then you must know the rest by the same means that you know these, *viz.* by believing Eye-witnesses of these things, who you find are persons worthy to be credited.

N. C. But I feel the Commands of *Christ* are exceeding good, and agreeable to humane Nature, which the Apostles have delivered to us.

C. That is, you find it good to live soberly, and peaceably; to be charitable to others, and to take up your own Cross with Contentedness and Patience ----

N. C. Yes.

C. But may not these things be felt by Heathens as well as you? And may not they by Experience commend the practice of these Vertues to us?

N. C. I think they have done it.

C. Then

C. Then this Experience of the goodness of *Christ*'s Commands is no proof of our Creed; by which we are distinguished from Heathens. No, nor will your Experience prove to any man that *Christ*'s Commands are excellent, any farther than he believes that you say true, when you tell him what trial you have made of the best kind of Life, and that you are a person fit to judge of the Difference of things.

N. C. Methinks I feel that *Jesus Christ* is in the Heavens, and in great Power and Glory there.

C. Whatsoever you feel in this matter, it is the *Effect* of your belief, not the *Cause* of it. I mean, you first believe, that he is in Glory; before you can feel any good hopes in your Soul of immortal Life. And you believe his being in Glory upon good Reasons; else you do not know but you entertain your self with a pleasant Dream, both of his Glory and yours. And lastly, whatever you feel it is no proof *of the truth of the Thing*, but only of *the truth of your Belief*. It is to be proved otherwise that *Christ* reigns gloriously in the Heavens, and is able to bring us into his everlasting Kingdom: Only your being so mightily affected with it, proves that indeed you believe it. But you had best look you have good Reasons for your Faith. For all the Severities of the Religious men among the *Turks*, prove likewise that they believe strongly in *Mahomet*; though I hope, if they quote their Experiences never so much, you will not be a Disciple to their Prophet, and hope he will take you by the hair of the head, and pull you up to Heaven.

N. C. I find that you are able to talk more rationally than I can in these matters. But yet I find likewise, there is another kind of Spirit in our people than in yours. For they *delight more in Heavenly Discourse*

and are *always talking of Religion* when they are together: which argues they are not of so *slight a Spirit* as others, who love to discourse of unprofitable things.

C. Do you and I talk frothily, (as your phrase is) and spend our time in unprofitable Chat? Is this Discourse earthly, and not at all pertaining to Religion? And, Deal sincerely with me, do not you sometime, when you are together, pass the time away in speaking against Bishops and Common-Prayer, and the Government? Do you not know some that are ever complaining of the Times in which we live; and saying, The former Days were better than these? And are the Reasons of this murmuring so Heavenly as you suppose? Do they not say the Nation was in more Credit, and had a better Reputation abroad, and they a better Trade at home, and such like things?

N. C. I cannot deny but I have heard some *Professors* talk thus. But there are a great number that you shall scarce ever hear talking of any thing else but Heaven, and *Jesus Christ*, and the business of their Souls.

C. And such people there are in all Parties and Sects in the Christian-World; who perhaps are never a whit the better for that.

N. C. How irreligiously you talk?

C. Not at all. For, unless they take a true delight in God, and in that Heavenly Discourse above all other things, and unless they understand what they say, and delight also, to do God's Will in all things: I think they had as good be talking of, or doing something else.

N. C. Can they possibly be better imploy'd?

C. Yes, that they may. For if they only tumble out a great many Words and Phrases which they have learn'd

learn'd, they had better be Studying what the Religion of *Jesus Christ* is. And if they talk of those matters meerly as it is a Duty, and be not so Heavenly-minded as that, whensoever they have leisure, it is the greatest joy that can be to be thinking or discoursing of them; they will do this after a very bad fashion, when some other good thing they might have done better; as, visited the Sick, inquired after the Wants of the Poor, or ordered some Parish-business. And again, unless they be very prudent, and do not think they must needs draw the Company wherein they are (who are ingag'd, perhaps, in other necessary Business) to hear their discourse; I think their room, as we say, would be better than their company; or, that it were better that they would hold their peace. For, if a man take himself to be bound in Conscience to be always speaking of these things, (as I doubt many do) it is the effect of *Superstition*, which makes Religion a great burthen to a man's self and others. For whether he and the Company be disposed or no, this he thinks is his Business, which he often manages very dully, and without any Taste: thereby rendring Christianity Contemptible, and making himself also still more flat and indisposed for all honest imployments. All which considered, I leave you to judge, whether that man had not better have bestow'd his time otherways; for then he might at the end of it have been good for something, whereas now he is good for nothing at all; but mopishly sits bewailing himself, and complaining of the deadness of his heart.

N. C. Ought not a man to be always thinking of Heaven?

C. No: He may and ought sometime to think of other things. And he should do it without any Scruple, not fearing that he is ill imploy'd, when he

doth not break God's Commands.

N. C. He may be meanly imploy'd.

C. That is, he is but a Man, and not yet come to the degree of an Angel.

N. C. But when others are recreating themselves (as you call it), ours are talking of Heaven.

C. If it be their choice, and if they do not neglect any necessary Business, nor censure others that do not as they do; I have nothing to say against them. But, as I told you, there are so many such like people in all Religions, that you must not imagine, this is a thing peculiar to yours. And if they think they offend God, if they do otherwise, and if they condemn those that now and then innocently recreate themselves, and sigh over them as if they were lost; they trouble the World and Themselves, to say no worse, a great deal too much with their *Superstition*.

N. C. You give liberty to your people even *to go to see Plays*.

C. Did you ever hear any of our Ministers commend Plays for a good Divertisement to their people?

N. C. No, But they do not discommend them, and shew how unlawful it is to use such pastimes.

C. How should they, when they never yet saw it prov'd, that they may not be lawfully used? But they preach against all undue and inordinate use of lawful pleasures, among which they number this for one. And in this business, they are as faithful as your Ministers could be, were they in their places; and perhaps a great deal more discreet.

N. C. These *discreet men* have spoil'd Religion.

C. You should have said *indiscreet men*, for that is the truth; who declaim so violently against innocent

cent things, that they are not at all regarded when they speak against things Sinful. Their Zeal is equal against things indifferent and things unlawful, and so the people easily imagine, there is no more reason against the one than against the other. Besides, they lay Burthens upon men which are not necessary, and make *Christ*'s Yoak heavier than indeed it is, which is a great Discouragement and Hindrance to some, making them unwilling to submit themselves to him. And again, they intangle Religious People in a world of Scruples, which make their lives very uncomfortable.

N.C. Then your Ministers, belike, allow your Religious people to go to a Play.

C. You have put a good word in my mouth; they do I believe, *allow* it in due measure? Incourage them to it they do not; but yet cannot say, if they be ask'd the question, that they sin, if they do.

N.C. They might tell them, *they may be better imploy'd.*

C. What Authority have they to pronounce that in general terms? Sometimes they may, and sometime, perhaps, they may not. And beside this, if we be always bound to do that which is best, (which you suppose) we can never tell whether we please God or no; but shall be ingag'd in endless Doubts. For it is an hard matter sometime to discern which is best: and one thing may appear best, when I consider such and such things; and another will seem best, when I reflect upon other matters. And I may verily be perswaded, looking but at a few things, that this thing is best for me to do, which indeed is rather bad, and should not be done. As, I may conceive it best to wear no Lace, no Ribbons, no fine Cloath or Silk, but give all the money I spend in such things to

the Poor: Whereas this may prove very pernicious, though it have a shew of great piety; and maintain many poor in idleness, that love not Work; and spoil the Labours and Trade of many others, who would not live idlely. Farther, how much time must we pass in resolving which is best in every action we do? As whether it be best to eat now, or stay a while longer; to drink this Cup of Wine which is offered me, or refuse it; to talk with a Friend, or to part with him: to visit a Neighbour, or to stay at home? And while we are deliberating in this fashion, the thing might be done which we had a mind unto; and we might be return'd to that which possibly we thought would be best. It is sufficient, therefore, that we be well imploy'd; and we ought not to torment our selves, and mispend our time in fears, lest we have not done the best. Let us but consider, whether no necessary Duty toward God or Man, that we are capable of, will be neglected, when we go to divert our selves: And then we should not spoil our innocent Delights with needless Jealousies.

N. C. But surely this liberty you give, will do people hurt, for they are apt to take too much of it.

C. Many will take it, whether we give it them or no. But I can assure you there are many excellent persons of extraordinary piety (whom I know) who will not take it, though we give it. Not that they think it an unlawful thing, as you do; but they have no use for that Liberty. They are above such Pleasures, and can find imployment or ingenious Divertisement that is far more sweet to them. I know others, that scruple not the thing at all, and yet judge it not so expedient for them in their place and relation; and

and ſo wholly forbear it: Which is a far greater Vertue than that which you boaſt of, as much as it is more noble to abſtain from thoſe pleaſures we think lawful, than to be reſtrained only from thoſe which we think are ſinful. I am acquainted with others alſo that go to Plays, but very rarely, only for a harmleſs Recreation when they are dull, or to accompany a Friend, that earneſtly importunes their company. And theſe, methinks, are as much above thoſe, whoſe Piety you ſo much admire; as it is an harder thing to abſtain from the pleaſures of which we have taſted, and find to be very agreeable to us, than to forbear thoſe, to which we are ſtrangers, and know nothing of. Beſides theſe, I know others that go oftner, and yet I dare not ſay, they are not pious, becauſe I ſee by all their actions that they love God and Man. And I have heard them ſay, that the time they ſpend on that faſhion, doth not hinder them in any Chriſtian Duty that they know of, (and yet they are not negligent to inform themſelves) and is a great deal better ſpent, than in talking againſt ones Neighbours, or hearing others rail upon the ill-management of Affairs, and find fault with the Times, or ſuch like things.

N. C. None of thoſe things need be done neither.

C. It is true. But they want company, and they can find little of any ſort, where thoſe things are not their entertainment. And it is very conſiderable, that ſuch people paſs for Godly among you, who ſpend many hours in talk of that nature now mention'd; and therefore we would fain know, why we may not with better reaſon call thoſe Godly that go to Plays, and otherways are unreproveable. I ſay with better Reaſon; both becauſe this is at leaſt more innocent (if it be not perfectly blameleſs) than backbiting ones

Neighbours; and our Godly do nothing but what they allow, whereas yours do that which they cannot but condemn. I am also of the opinion, that our Ministers speak as often (if not more frequently) against the excessive use of that Recreation, as yours do against all Bitterness, Wrath, Anger, Backbiting, and Evil-speaking, which are altogether unlawful.

N.C. I did not think you would have justified these things so far as you do.

C. You need not have a worse opinion of me for that, because I do it not to justifie my self. For I am one of those that never saw a Play in my life, nor ever intend to see one. I could wish also there were not so many acted, because they invite men, perhaps, too often to them. But tell me, I pray you, why one may not as well look upon a Picture, as upon the man himself whom it represents? Or, why a Painter should be commended, and a Player condemned?

N.C. I understand you not.

C. A Play doth but present mens Actions before you, as a Picture doth their Faces. And since you see such things done every day as they there represent, why may you not see both the things and the Representation of them, if you have a mind? Nay, tell me why they that do, should not be thought to spend their time as well as you, that can hear long Stories of the Bishops, or of such and such a Parson, (as you in scorn, though very foolishly, call our Ministers; for some of them are but Vicars, and you your selves would be glad to hold a good Parsonage, as many Lay-men do) or of some of your Neighbors; whose Life and (perhaps) domestick and private Affairs, you having pry'd into, can be talking of half-a-day together? This is, in truth, no better than hearing of a Play; only you do not see it. That is, you hear the same things, that others both

both hear and ſee acted in a Play; and there is a great deal of Art, and Wit, and Fancy; and you have none.

N. C. I think our time ought not to be ſpent in either of theſe, as I told you before.

C. I am well content it ſhould be ſo. But let our people be as Godly as yours (if this be all you have to ſay againſt them) ſince you confeſs they do both alike, or are not much different. Do not caſt them out of the Houſe of God meerly becauſe they go to a Play-houſe: But hope, that though you are Gilt more glorioufly, yet they may be as good Metal as you. And therefore let them ſtand upon *God's Cupboard* no leſs than your ſelves.

N. C. How come you to talk thus *Metaphorically*, and indeed obſcurely? For though I gueſs at your meaning, yet it is not ſo plain as you pretend to ſpeak.

C. A great deal plainer than *W. B.* ſpeaks; who, in one of the *Ten Sermons* I told you of, informs us, that God is departed from the Nation, but will return again, becauſe he hath left a great Cup-board of plate behind him. *Believe it Chriſtians*, ſays he, *God hath a very great Cup-board of plate in this Nation, Chriſt hath much plate in* England, *as much as in any Nation in the World, and he will not loſe his plate.* But he will not tell us how he is gone, nor when he went, nor what drove him away, nor what his Return will be, no nor what Mark there is upon the plate, whereby we may know it. And I doubt you would not be well-pleaſed; if I ſhould go about to gueſs what he means by all this.

N. C. Nothing but what is good, you may be ſure.

C. Let the *King* look to that, and get it expounded; for I believe he is concern'd to know, whether the time when God went away was not when he came into *England* laſt, and ſo whether he muſt not be gone and pack't away, when God returns again to you.

N. C.

N. C. I do not like this Diſcourſe.

C. Do you mean of mine, or of his?

N. C. Of neither.

C. It's well, you do not approve of his; but why you ſhould diſlike mine, I know not. For if you your ſelf was a King, you would look upon them as dangerous people, who ſhould ſuppoſe God had forſaken your Kingdom ſince you came to it.

N. C. He means, perhaps, no more but that God hath deſerted them, who are his people, and once enjoy'd more liberty than now they do.

C. You cannot excuſe him ſo; for the Title of his Sermon tells you that it relates either to a Soul, or to a Nation. And in the body of the Diſcourſe (if it deſerve that name) he often applies it to *this Nation*, ſaying, *What ſhall we do that God may return to this Nation?*

N. C. He would not have you think that he is quite gone; for he only ſaith, *God is much departed, and gone in great meaſure.*

C. True: But his meaning is plainly this, That he would be quite gone, but that he and ſuch like are here. Were but they removed, God would have no dwelling among us. It's they that lay hold on him, and will not let him totally depart. They are his Plate, and as long as that remains, he hath ſomething to ingage his affections, and ſo will not perfectly abandon the Nation. But for all that, he complains ſometimes, as if the Lord had abhorred and caſt us off, telling us, *that Chriſt is offended, his Goſpel-Inſtitutions trampled on; and, that it is not an eaſie thing to bring him back.* And it is very likely, if he had thought of it, he would have told you, *That the Plate upon the Cupboard is thrown down, the Plate is batter'd and bruiſed, the Plate is abuſed and ſoil'd.* For he tells his Congregation,

tion, *You are in a suffering day*, pag. 478.

N.C. What if he had said so?

C. Then, to make the Play compleat, one need only have added this, That the *Plate must be at least well scoured, if not a little beaten.*

N.C. That is, You would have us persecuted.

C. Not I; but since you fansie you are persecuted, when you are not, it would not be amiss, if your Folly were a little chastised, in order to make you thankful for the Liberty which, even by Law, you enjoy.

N.C. To me your words are as bad as a Persecution, which compare good Sermons to a Play.

C. Why! that Sermon hath more of Fiction in it than many of the Plays. For, they are sometimes grounded upon an Historical truth: but he entertain'd the people in his Theatre with a pleasant piece of his own pure Invention; telling a Story of God's Departure, and of his coming back again, and their excelling other men as much as a Cup-board of Plate doth common Furniture, and of their remaining here as a pledge of his Return; when as there is no such thing, but only in his and their Fancy. Only one thing I observe, he very wisely conceals, lest it should happen to prove in their conceit a plain Tragedy. For having said, in order to assure them of God's Return, *That if a man have left Plate and Jewels in his House, he will either come back to them, or send for them away to him*; this pleasant Gentleman, supposing his Hearers (together with his *Truth* and *Worship*, *i. e.* their Opinions and way of serving God) to be the Plate; would not disturb their Fancies by telling them, That according to the state of that Resemblance, God will either return to them, or send for them to him, but tells them absolutely, he will return again to them. Read his words,

words, (p.477.) *Such Plate the Lord hath much of here, and he will not lose his Plate; therefore he will return again, though he may afflict, and afflict sorely, yet he will return again.* And a little after (p.482.) *As sure as the Morning is after the Night, so sure will God return. His going forth is prepared as the Morning: as certain he will return as the Morning doth.* This I must needs say, was kindly said, and like a Poet; who can invent what he pleases, and leave out what makes not for his turn.

N. C. Methinks you invent what you please. And since you are so good at it, I pray let me know what invention you have to excuse your Plays, which have so much Obscœnity in them.

C. It's more than I know, if they have any at all. And, should there be any, assure your self, the Ears of those whom we esteem Godly, are no less chast than yours, and would not endure it. But did you ever hear that any of our Ministers spoke things so nearly approaching to immodesty as *W. B.* doth?

N. C. I shall stop my ears, if you offer to rake into such matters.

C. I did not intend it, were you never so willing to hear it. I would only have you know, that if I should present you with all the filthy Expressions and Allusions that I have met withal in such Books as his, I should make you repent that ever you led me to this Discourse.

N. C. I cannot conceive that they should fall into such Errours, since they are *the strictest sort of men*, as you very well know; and love *to preach very plainly.*

C. Now I understand, what you mean by *plain preaching*, (which you so much talk of), *viz.* To use rude and broad expressions. As when *W. B.* saith, *a little Estate is but a Mess of Pottage; and a great Estate, a gre-*

a great Bowl of Pottage. Have I not hit your meaning?

N. C. No.

C. Then it is very hard to know what it is. And indeed, the Assembly of Divines, when they direct men how to perform their Ministry, and among other things tell them they must preach *plainly*, do not speak plainly themselves in their Directory, *i. e.* not so as to be understood. For these are their words, *p.* 17. *The Servant of* Christ *is to perform his whole Ministry*, &c. *Plainly, that the meanest may understand, delivering the Truth, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom; but in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, lest the Cross of* Christ *should be made of none effect.* Now since you acknowledge they cannot Prophesie, nor speak with Tongues, nor Demonstrate their Doctrine by Miracles, as the Apostles did; I would gladly know what they mean by the Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power. I am apt to think it would puzzle a new Assembly, to tell us in plain words, what they intended by that Phrase.

N. C. If you *were taught of God*, as they are, you would easily know.

C. We are all taught of God by the Apostles, who have revealed his Mind to us, and that in a Divine manner. And therefore by pretending you are taught of God more than we, when you cannot prove it, you only shew that you are taught to Cant in Scripture-phrase. Pray let's see if you understand any better, another Direction of theirs, which is to *preach painfully, not doing the Work of the Lord negligently.* Whom do you account a *Painful Preacher?*

N. C. One that takes a great deal of pains.

C. It

C. It is just as plain as it was before; and you give me a very good demonstration, how well you are bred to a clear and plain understanding of things. But that which you mean, I believe, is, One who preaches often.

N. C. Yes.

C. That's the way to do the work of the Lord negligently, as common experience hath taught us.

N. C. Not, if they take pains to consider what they say.

C. But you would see them so often in the Pulpit, that you do not allow them time for that, and other Ministerial Duties. Hence it is, that upon all occasions they apply the Holy Scriptures, very impertinently, and interpret them negligently, and alledge that for a Proof, which is nothing to the purpose, nay, quite contrary to that which they maintain. Witness *W. B.* who from that place in *Hosea* 6. 3. (*his going forth is prepared as the Morning*) would have his people believe, that God will as certainly return to them, as the Morning is after the Night. Whereas that is only spoken to the Ten Tribes; and the Prophet doth not give them an absolute assurance that they shall return to their own Land; but only invites them to Repentance, and on that condition promiseth, God in a little time will revive them. Nay, he requires, not only that they should begin *to know God* whom they had forsaken; but that they should *continue and persevere to know him:* and then, saith he, *his going forth is prepared as the Morning, i. e.* He was ready to comfort them, as the Morning-light doth those that wait for it; *and would come upon them as the Rain* which quickens and calls back the Corn to life, which otherwise would have lain dead in the Earth. It is true, *W. B.* saith a little before, *If you desire God*

should

ſhould return to you, return you to him; as if there were ſome condition in the buſineſs. But this is only his uſual way of ſaying, and unſaying; of granting promiſes to be *Conditional*, which he would have his people believe ſhall be performed *Abſolutely*. And, indeed, ſo much he had told them before this, that they might not be diſcomforted, though they did not return to God. *Friends*, ſaith he, (pag. 478.) *there is a time, when God will deliver his people for his Name's Sake, and with a Notwithſtanding*, *i. e.* notwithſtanding all their Sins, and notwithſtanding all his Diſpleaſure, as he explains himſelf. Now if you would know when that time is, he tells us, *When a people ſuffer for God's Name's ſake, then God will deliver for his Name's ſake, then God will deliver with a Notwithſtanding.* And this he would have them believe is their preſent State and Condition. *How is it with you now?* (they are his words) *you are in a ſuffering day; but are not all your ſufferings for the Name of Chriſt? Be of good comfort then; though God may be departed, and your City deſtroyed, yet he is not quite gone, but will return again*: that is, notwithſtanding all their Sins, he would not leave them. Do you not ſee how confident he is? This it is, for men to fanſie themſelves *at the Father's Knee, and to be in his Arms, and held in his Embraces, and in his Smiles*, (as he ſpeaks, *pag.* 469.) They ſay even what they pleaſe, when they are full of this conceit; and think it is the Oracles of God. They tell you their own mind, and believe it is the mind of the Lord. And when they tell it you in ſuch delicate Expreſſions as theſe, or ſuch rude and groſs ones as thoſe before mentioned; you call it *plain Preaching*, and *powerful Preaching*.

N. C. The Aſſembly told you (if you would have obſerv'd) what *plain Preaching* is, in that very place, which

which you quoted; where they require Ministers to forbear unprofitable use of unknown Tongues, strange Phrases, Cadences of Sounds and Words, and to cite Sentences out of Writers sparingly, though never so Elegant.

C. By your favour, this is only one part of that which they call Plain Preaching. For first, they say, a Minister must preach in the Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power: And then it follows, *Abstaining also from an unprofitable use*, &c. So that still we are to seek what that *Preaching with Power* means. And as for this sort of plain preaching now mention'd, either your Ministers do not understand it, or do not mind it. For who hath more *strange Phrases* than *W. B*? Or, (to pass by him, who it's like regards not the Directory.) Who is there that stuffs his Sermons with more Shreds of Authors, and more affects little Sayings and Cadences of Sounds and Words, than *T. W.* As for his *Power* in preaching, I shewed you before how unable it is to Rouze and Shake an Hypocrite, and bring him to Repentance. For he studies rather to please him with the enticing words of Man's Wisdom, (though after a poor fashion) than to make a plain Representation of his Wretched State and Condition to him. If many of those, whom you despise, had had the handling of him, they would have turn'd his inside outward, and set it before his eyes: They would have ript his very Heart, and discovered his Entrals that he might have beheld how he stands divided between God and the World. He should have seen how many secret Sins he suffers to lurk in his Breast: Nay, in what a detestable manner he reserves a Kindness for many of the vilest Sins; such as are Covetousness, Oppression, Hard dealing, Unmercifulness,

ness; Malice, Revenge, Bitterness, Wrath, Implacableness, and such like; which are the Sins of too many Religious people, that is, of Hypocrites, that are not intire and uniform in their Religion. For an Hypocrite is not a *meer Player* in Religion, as *T. W.* fansies: But one that concerns himself with a mighty Zeal for some good things, and, perhaps, would rather die, than not do them, but hath no Affection for the rest of *Christs* Commands. He doth not only put on a Garb of piety to deceive others; but there are a number of men that love some part of piety, and by that means deceive their own Souls. And let you and I, my good Neighbour, look to it, that we be not of that number.

N. C. Our Ministers, you may well think, give us such Cautions. For you must acknowledge, as I intimated before, (but you would pass it by) that they are the *strictest people in the World*, and teach us so to be.

C. So were the *Pharisees*: For that Sect was more curious and exact in many things than any of the rest. But these two things among many others you shall observe of them. *First*, that they were very desirous of the people's Favour and Esteem: The desire of pleasing whom, I doubt, sometimes betrays your Preachers into such rude and unhandsome speeches, as I have heard and seen from them. And *secondly*, the best of them (as appears in S. *Paul*) were carried with a blind prepostorous Zeal, even against the Truth of *Christ*; which arose from their high Esteem of themselves, and a Confidence they were very dear to God above all others. I wish the like Heat, and Conceit of your infallible spirit do not now make you violently oppose many things which have *Christs* Stamp upon them. And then you had best examine whether

you are not *ſtrict people*, juſt as they are *plain Preachers*.

N. C. Your meaning.

C. I mean, *not ſtrict*. For as to me thoſe are very obſcure Speakers, and hard to be underſtood, whom you call *plain:* So it is poſſible, thoſe may take too much Liberty, eſpecially in their Tongues, whom you call *ſtrict*.

N. C. Oh, Sir, there *are no people ſo ſerious* as they.

C. If you mean that they look ſolemnly, and will not laugh, nor be merry; it is like, it's true of ſome of them. But whether this be the effect of their Religion, or their Natural Temper, it is no great matter; for it doth not much commend them. Otherwiſe, if you mean, that they long conſider things, and come not to a Reſolution till it be late; that they ponder all their words and actions, and weigh well what they are going about; I doubt, you will find but few of theſe *ſerious* perſons, for to me, the Zeal of moſt of you ſeems to make you heady and raſh. I have obſerved, for inſtance, that they are apt preſently to condemn thoſe that are merry; or at leaſt to ſhake their Heads, and expreſs their fears as if they were *too vain and light-Spirited*. This Cenſure hath a ſhew of Seriouſneſs, but in truth, proceeds from a want of it. But if you mean, that they are *in good earneſt in their Religion:* So are many of the *Nuns* and *Friars*, and other devout people among the *Papiſts*, who *ſeriouſly* ſay their *Ave Maries* and *Pater Noſters*, and would not omit them for all the World. And ſo were the *Phariſees* a very *ſerious people*, eſpecially upon a Sabbath, and would not neglect their Devotions (in which they were earneſt and long) for any good. And aſſure your ſelf, a man may be ſerious in Religion, and

and yet be an Hypocrite: That is, he may in good earnest do many Duties, and love to Pray, and Hear, and Repeat Sermons, and the like; And all the while he may in as good earnest love the World very much, and (to say no more) love the praise of men, and desire to be better thought of than his Neighbours. In short, he may love Money and Esteem, being Covetous and Ambitious as the Pharisees were.

N. C. You love to compare us with the Pharisees. Were they such a *tender conscienc'd people?*

C. Yes indeed were they, in many things. They would rather die than break the Sabbath: They made a great Scruple of walking above so many Paces upon that day, and had infinite Ceremonies and Superstitions about its Observation; of which they were so tender, that they could not endure any body else should break them. The like Tenderness they had about Idolatry, and many other things. But yet they made no bones (as we say) of a Widow's house, which they could devour at one bit, as soon as the Sabbath was done: They were horribly Covetous and desirous of Riches. They made no Conscience of Oppression and Extortion: They were monstrously Uncharitable and Proud: They thought themselves the wisest and the best men in the world, and despised all others, as men that knew not what Religion meant. And, lest you should think they wanted Zeal to increase their party, (which they called Love to pure Religion) *they compassed Sea and Land* (as *Christ* tells you) *to make a Proselyte*, who, when he was gain'd, *became twofold more the Child of Hell than themselves.* Which thing I would have you observe, because it shews us, That men may be converted from gross Prophaneness to Sins of a more Spiritual and Invisible nature; to Diabolical Pride, and Malice, and rage against

all that oppose their Sect. And therefore you would do well to consider again, whether there be not many such Converts now that hate us as much as they do Common-Prayer, and are zealous for little else but to make men Non-Conformists, and to disgrace those that are not.

N. C. I did not think you would have pleaded so hard for all the Superstitions and Superstitious people of your Church. And, to tell you all my mind, I should love your Minister better, if he did not seem to love the Common-Prayer so well. For he reads it with as much Devotion as he expresses in his own prayers; and besides, he maintains the Use of it, and the things appointed by it (as you do) in his private discourses.

C. In my mind, you ought to like him the better for this, because he is not an *Hypocrite*, and doth not that to get a Living which he inwardly dislikes, nor approves that by publick practice, which he disallows or discommends in private talk. And methinks it argues too much insincerity in your selves, that you could be content, nay glad, that another man should do contrary to his Conscience and Profession; either in using those Prayers which he inwardly disaffects, or in speaking against them (at least silently hearing them reproached) when he is convinced of their goodness. Above all, I wonder how any honest-hearted man can endure him that mutters over the publick Prayers (which he pretends by his use of them to like) without any Spirit or life, on purpose to disgrace them and bring them into contempt; at least to make his own prayers better accepted and preferr'd before them.

N. C. Well, but what need he justifie and maintain the use of the Common-Prayer, where-ever he hears it disputed of?

C. B

C. He thereby doth but justifie himself and his own practice. It seems you would have him stand like a Fool with his Finger in his Mouth, Meerly to humour you. And withall, you would fain have it thought that all Consciencious men are of your mind; if they had but Heart and Courage to profess it.

N. C. Well, Neighbour, I think we had best leave off this Trade of talking one against the other, and finding out one anothers faults: which I see is the business both of you and us.

C. To say the Truth, it would be more for the Interest of Christianity, if we did. But though you seem very desirous, in a good mood, that we should cease to undermine each the other, and both joyn together to promote sound Religion and true Piety; yet this Fit holds not long. For commonly you labour nothing more than to overthrow the Religion established; nay, many of you glory in your hopes of this; as if it were a mighty matter to pull down a Building, and bring things to Ruine; which is the easiest thing in the world; the work of Ignorance and Confidence; and, as one of our Ministers said, *the Pastime of the Devil, and the Imployment of his Children*; of whom we may speak in the Apostle's words, *Rom.* 3. 16. *Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of Peace have they not known.* In order to this; You disgrace the Bishops; undervalue, if not despise all our Ministers; revile the Common-Prayer; accuse us of Superstition, Popery, and Anti-Christianism, and what not? You every where divulge and spread abroad the Faults of any of the Clergy: and rejoyce to hear or tell a Story of any drunken *Parson*, as you are wont to call the best of them by way of derision. Nay, you have more Favour and kindness for wild and Phanatick

people, who undermine the very Foundation of Religion, than for us.

N. C. No more of this, I pray you.

C. I should rather say to you, Let us hear no more of this: and I shall rejoyce and be ready to correspond with you in all offices of Love and Kindness.

N. C. Belike you can love one of our way.

C. Yes, very heartily. And therefore I would not have you expound any thing I have said, as if it were meant against the humble, the modest, the charitable, and such as are afflicted and mourn for our present Differences; but as intended to check the pride and presumption of many among you, who, though full of Folly, think they know the Mind of God more than all the Bishops and Priests in the World; and, by their Confidence and bold pretence of the Spirit, would over-bear all sober Reason, and impose all their fond Opinions on us; making the poor people believe, that they are God's only Favourites, and fit to teach and rule the whole Nation. These we cannot well suffer to strut as they do, and not endeavour to display their Vanity: Nor can we approve of those who for the sake of their party, are content to dissemble it, if not favour their impudent pretences. For we know well enough how like they are in many things to St. *Paul*'s formal Christians; especially in this one part of their Character, that they are *Despisers of those that are good*. A thing I would by no means be guilty of, and therefore hope you will not suspect my esteem of you.

N. C. I am glad you are so charitably disposed; and am the more pleased, because I thought you had looked upon us with the greatest Detestation in the world.

C. I have already told you, that we do not think you all of a Kind, though now you flock together.

There

There are some (of your Ministers for instance) who I believe are of an humble Spirit, quiet and peaceable in the Land, desiring Unity and Accord, grieving for the Breach of it; and are so far from condemning those, that are satisfied to do what the Law requires, that they are sorry, they cannot contribute to the common Peace by doing the same. Upon which account they go as far as they can, and conform to publick Order in all things wherein they are satisfied, and are tender of breaking any Laws; and when they cannot obey them, do not rail upon them, and their Makers, but silently and without any noise omit to do what they enjoyn. These we cannot but love; and are sorry that in so great a number we can find so few of this good temper. For there is a *second* sort, (with which the Kingdom swarms) who are of an haughty Humour, of a furious and factious Disposition, puft up with a conceit of their Gifts to such a height, that they will scarce allow any man to know any thing of God, who is not of their Party. Sowr and crabbed they are above all other men, cross and peevish beyond all expression; they never speak well of our Governours or Government; they are always reviling Bishops and Common-Prayer; and talking like men inspired: it is an easie matter for them to disparage all our Ministry, and beget an ill opinion of them in the minds of their credulous Followers. Which we conceiving to be their Business, no wonder if our men seek to preserve themselves, not by disgracing, but by rightly representing them to the World. They ought not to betray the Church wherein they live, by a base and unworthy Silence. Even the meanest Child of us ought to speak, when you are about to kill our Mother. Your long Nails wherewith you now scratch her Face must be

shewn the people; who see them not, while they behold your hands lifted up to Heaven. But besides these two, there is a *third* sort between both, who are dissatisfied only with a few things; allow our Ministers to be good men, and wish for Peace, but yet for private respects hold fair correspondence with the Furies now named; keep up the Separation; hold Conventicles; suffer the people, without reproof, to be fierce and violent against us; connive at a great many of their false and absurd Opinions; let them alone in their rude and insolent behaviour; take not sufficient care to instruct them in the Truth, to bring them to a modest and peaceable temper; In short, to qualifie them for Compliance with us. Do not smile at the word, for I can demonstrate, it might be soon brought about, if they pleased.

N. C. How, I Pray? Can you do more than all the men in the Kingdom?

C. Let them perswade their people but to be of their mind, and the business is done.

N. C. Do you think they do not?

C. No, I warrant you. If they did, the people would conform, though they cannot. For that which keeps this sort of Ministers from Conforming, is not any thing to which the people are bound, but something particularly required of them.

N. C. You have revealed a Secret to me.

C. It is easie for any body to find out, that hath a mind to it. There being nothing plainer than this, that they would have read those prayers which I would have you hear, if something else had not been in the way, which you are not concerned in; and that is, Renouncing the Covenant. Let them then but perswade you to do all that they can do themselves, and in order to that give you Reasons why it

should

should be done; and then I may hope to see, you and I go to the same Church together: And for them that do not stand upon the Covenant, (for there are some such) they have the greater reason to exhort you to come, nay, to come themselves, and bring you along with them. But lest they should not do their duty, give me leave to speak to you in those very words which they have writ to others; and, if you think they have now any weight in them, (as I believe you once thought they had) we shall not be long separated.

N. C. What have they writ?

C. In a Book call'd *A Vindication of the Presbyterial Government*, &c. You will find a speech of your *Ministers and Elders in the Province of London*, to those that had left their Communion, and stood in divided Congregations from them: Which if it had any force then in your opinion, ought to prevail with you now to come and joyn your self again to us, whom you have forsaken. I will cite you some passages of it (in their own words.) And let me begin with those which you find *pag.* 130. in a distinct Character, (as the strength, I suppose, of what they had to say) *If we be a Church of* Christ, *and* Christ *hold Communion with us, why do you separate from us? If we be the Body of* Christ, *do not they that separate from the Body, separate from the Head also?* "We are loath to speak any thing "that may offend you, yet we intreat you to con-"sider, that if the Apostle call those Divisions of "the Church of *Corinth*, (wherein Christians did "not separate into divers formed Congregations "of several Communion in the Sacrament of the "Lords Supper) *Schism*, 1 Cor. 1. 10. may not "your *Secession* from us, and *professing* you cannot "joyn with us as Members, and setting up Congre-

"gations

"gations of another Communion, be more properly "called *Schism*? Thus they pleaded for Unity and Uniformity in those days, (1649.) And we say the very same now. Be just, I beseech you; and either pronounce that they had no reason on their side when they wrote those words, or that we have reason too, who use the same to you. Hear also what they say a little after, and think one of us speaks it to you, "*You gather Churches out of our Churches, and you set up Churches in an opposite way to our Churches; and all this you do voluntarily, and unwarrantably, not having any sufficient cause for it. For you acknowledge us to be the true Churches of* Jesus Christ, *and Churches with which* Christ *holds Communion.* This, I dare say, is the Judgement of every true *Presbyterian*, that the Church of *England* is a true Member of *Christ*'s Body, and that *Christ* holds Communion with her, and hath not cut her off (because of any Ceremonies she uses) from him the Head of the Church. If so, consider, I beseech you, as they intreat their Brethren of the Separation, How dare you refuse to hold Communion with those, whom *Christ Jesus* holds Communion withall? How can you with a safe Conscience thus separate your selves from those who are not separated from *Christ*? Is it nothing to make a *Schism* in his Body? Do you not rend your selves from Him, when you thus rend your selves from it? Think seriously on it, before you sleep; that you may, at least in purpose and resolution, presently unite your self to us, from whom you have departed.

N. C. But I am told *that every Separation is not a Schism.*

C. To this they answer in that Book, and pray mind it: *The godly Learned say, that every unjust and rash Separation from a true Church (that is, when there is no just,*

or

or at least no sufficient cause of the Separation) is a Schism: And that, there is a Negative and a Positive Schism. The former is, when men do peaceably and quietly draw from Communion with a Church, not making a head against that Church, from which they are departed: The other is, when persons so withdrawing do conspeciate and withdraw themselves into a distinct and opposite Body, setting up a Church against a Church; (which let me tell you by the way, is your Case, my good Neighbour) *which* Camero *calls a Schism by way of eminency, and further tells us, There are four Causes, that make a separation from a Church, lawful. First, when they that separate are grievously and intolerably persecuted: Secondly, when the Church they separate from is Heretical: Thirdly, when it is Idolatrous: Fourthly, when it is the Seat of Antichrist. And where none of these four are found, there the Separation is insufficient, and Schism. Now we are fully assured, that none of these four Causes can be justly charged upon our Congregations; therefore you must not be displeased with us, but with your selves, if we blame you as guilty of positive Schism.* What say you now, my Neighbour? Was this good Doctrine then, or no? If it was, it is so still; and I beseech you, make good use of it.

N. C. Some think, it is a sufficient cause to separate, in that there are such sinful mixtures tolerated among you, and that your Congregations are miscellaneous Companies of all Gatherings, and all sorts are admitted even to Sacramental Communion.

C. That's the very Objection which your Ministers and Elders saw framed against them by the Separatists. And what they answer to them, we return to you, First, That this Charge is not true; the Rule of the Church of *England* being as full and strict for Church-Members, that shall come to Communion, as that of the Assembly there cited, *pag.* 133. which

is

is this: *That they must be visible Saints, such as, being of age, do profess Faith in* Christ, *and Obedience to* Christ, *according to the Rules of Faith and Life, taught by* Christ *and his Apostles.* Secondly, *Suppose there were some sinful Mixture (say they) at our Sacrament; yet we conceive, this is not a sufficient ground of a Negative, much less of a Positive Separation. The Learned Author forementioned tells us, that Corruption in Manners, crept into a Church, is not a sufficient cause of Separation from it. This he proves from* Matth. 23. 2, 3. *and he adds also this Reason for it; Because in what Church soever there is Purity of Doctrine, there God hath his Church, though overwhelm'd with Scandals. And therefore whosoever separates from such an Assembly, separates from the place where God hath his Church; which is rash and unwarrantable. The Church of* Corinth *had such a profane Mixture at their Sacrament, as we believe few (if any) of our Congregations can be charged withal; and yet the Apostle doth not perswade the Godly party to separate, much less to gather a Church out of a Church.*

N. C. What do you tell me of the Doctrine of a Forreign Divine?

C. They have made it theirs, by approving what he says, in their Book. And besides they tell you, *there were many Godly and Learned Non-conformists of the last Age, that were perswaded in their Conscience they could not hold Communion with the Church of* England *in receiving the Sacrament kneeling, without Sin; yet did they not separate from her. Indeed, in that particular all they withdrew, but yet so, as that they held Communion with her in the rest; being far from a Negative, much more from a Positive Separation from her. Nay, some of them,* (mind the words) *even then, when our Churches were full of sinful Mixtures, with great Zeal and Learning defended them so far, as to write against those that did separate*

from

from them. Who theſe Good and Learned men were, they tell you in the Margin; Mr. *Cartwright*, Mr. *Dod*, Mr. *Hilderſham*, Mr. *Bradſhaw*, Mr. *Ball*.

N. C. Then we ſhall communicate with men in their ſins; and we muſt not be led to that by the greateſt Examples.

C. To prevent that, they will adviſe you, that if any Brother offend you, you are not to ſeparate from him, (for this is not the way to gain, but to deſtroy his Soul;) but to tell him of it privately, and in an orderly way to bring it to the Church. *And when you have done your Duty; you have freed your Soul, and may ſafely and comfortably communicate in that Church without Sin.*

N. C. I perceive you are read in our Writers. And, truly, you have now told me ſo much from them; that I ſhall not have ſo hard an opinion of you, as I had before. And I hope this will preſerve me from being guilty of the ſin of Schiſm, becauſe the Nature of that conſiſts in an open breach of Chriſtian Love.

C. This will not ſerve your turn, but you muſt come and joyn in Communion with us again. For they tell you, *that as he, who denies a Fundamental Article of the Faith, is guilty of Hereſie, though he add not Obſtinacy thereto, to make him an Heretick: So, he that doth unwarrantably ſeparate from the true Church is truly guilty of Schiſm, though he add not Uncharitableneſs thereunto, to denominate him a compleat Schiſmatick*, you may read the words, if you will, *pag.* 137. *And afterward they tell you that; to make a Rupture in the Body of* Chriſt, *and to divide Church from Church, and to ſet up Church againſt Church, and to gather Churches out of true Churches, and becauſe we differ in ſome things, therefore to hold Church-Communion in*

nothing;

nothing; this, we think, hath no warrant out of the word of God, and will introduce all manner of confusion in Churches and Families, and not only disturb, but in a little time destroy the power of Godliness, Purity of Religion, Peace of Christians, and set open a wide Gap to bring in Atheism, Popery, Heresie, and all manner of Wickedness. Thus they. And how fast all this is a doing by your means, who now will have no Communion with us in any thing, because we differ in some things, is apparent to all the world. For the love of God, and of the Church, nay, of your own Families, consider of it in time, and repent; that so they may not be brought to utter Confusion, but the Gap may be stopt, which you have opened too wide already, to Atheism, Irreligion, and all the rest of the Wickedness which comes, pouring-in it self upon us. Do not continue that Separation any longer, which you have rashly begun; lest you be found guilty of that very thing your selves, which you condemned so much in others, and profess *is by all good men to be abhorred.* Read what I have now said, over and over again, and seriously lay it to heart; lest your own Books be opened at the day of Judgement, and Sentence be pronounced against you out of them. Nay, desire your Ministers to read it, and to expound the reason to you, why they should separate now more than Mr. *Dod*, Mr. *Hildersham*, Mr. *Ball*, and such like, did heretofore. Intreat them to let you know, how they excuse themselves from the guilt, not only of withdrawing themselves from our Communion, (which they call *Negative Schism*;) but also of making an head against us, and drawing themselves into a distinct and opposite Body, and setting up a Church against a Church which they call *Positive, and Schism by way of Eminency*, Ask them, which of the four Causes of

of Separation they alledge to make their Departure from us necessary: What we have done that should make it unlawful for them to communicate with us; or rather, How we have separated our selves from *Jesus Christ*, and made him dis-own us. If they be not able to give you very good satisfaction in this, and in all the rest, I hope, you see what you are to do, according to their own Advice and Counsel.

N.C. I suppose, they will say that they are persecuted, which will justifie their separation.

C. I cannot imagine what they should pretend, unless it be this. But, bid them shew you what hath befallen them, that would deserve that name. And likewise shew, that the Persecution is grievous, nay, intolerable, (for else they have told you it will not warrant a Separation:) and one thing more desire to learn of them, which is, Whether those things that any of them have suffered, be not the Effect and Punishment of their separation, and not the Cause of it. As for any Restraints the Law hath laid upon their Liberty, they are nothing comparable to those that were laid on us, when they were in Power: And yet they will take it ill if they should be called Persecutors. For if you look into an *Ordinance of Parliament* of 11. *August* 1645. *for putting in execution the Directory*, you will find these words: *That if any person or persons whatsoever, shall, at any time or times hereafter, use, or cause the aforesaid Book of Common-Prayer to be used in any Church, Chappel, or publick place of Worship, or in any private place or Family, within the Kingdom of* England, *or the Dominion of* Wales, *or Port and Town of* Berwick; *every such person so offending therein, shall for the first offence, pay the sum of five pounds of lawful* English *money; for the second offence, ten pounds; and for the third, shall suffer one whole*

years

years Imprisonment, without Bail or Mainprise. Can you name me any Law now extant so severe and cruel, as this was? Do we abridge the poorest Tradesman so much of his Liberty, as then they would have abridg'd all the Nobles in the Land, nay (for any thing I see) the KING himself, at least his Family, which were forbid the use of Common-Prayer under such great Penalties? Are you not all allowed to worship God, just as you please your selves, in your own Families? Nay, may not some of your Neighbours joyn with you, if you and they be so minded? For shame do not complain of Persecution, when you are so kindly used, who indeavoured in such a manner to oppress others. And blush to think that you should separate upon this account; which yet is all that you can have the face to pretend, to excuse the Schism you have made. The *Common-Prayer* you see was never imposed with such rigour, as your Directory was. And whereas you now take what Liberty you list to Preach, and Write, and Print what you think good against the Common-Prayer; it was then ordain'd, *that none should do so against the Directory, or any thing contain'd therein,* (which is a great deal more; and in case any man was so bold, *he was to forfeit such a sum of money, as should be thought fit to be imposed on him, by those before whom he had his Tryal; provided it was not less than five pounds, nor more than fifty.* Who should try him, no body knew; but he was sure to meet with little favour if the *Directory-men* met with him, and were to handle him; who would tolerate no Dissenters from them. And their reason is given, (in the *London*-Minister's Letter to the Assembly) because they were *bound by the Covenant to extirpate all Schism*; and *to indeavour, the Lord should be one, and his Name one, in the Three Kingdoms,* i. e. That all

should

should subscribe to the Directory. And there is another thing which to me seems something hard, (I am sure you ought to judge it so), viz. an Ordinance of 2 *June* 1646. requiring, *that all people who were come to reside in the Parliament-Quarters, should take the National League and Covenant, and the Negative Oath, notwithstanding any Articles that had been made by the Souldiery.* Why should you complain of the late *Oxford*-Act (as it is commonly called) who could endure heretofore that men should be used so severely? Compare that and this Ordinance together, and tell me which of them is most moderate; That which banished men out of many Counties; or that which only prohibits their near Habitation to a Town or two? that which made void the promises which their own Officers had made, or that which was against no ingagements at all? I wish you would consider these things, with a great many more of like nature; for, though your prejudices are strong, I hope sometime they may serve to convince you. And the mention of the Covenant, just now brings a considerable thing to my mind; which if it would not be tedious, I would willingly propound, and desire you to enquire about it.

N. C. I pray, say on, for your discourse begins to be pleasant to me.

C. I wish you would ask your Ministers, Why they themselves heretofore not only approved of certain Ceremonies in the Worship of God, but also were well-pleased they should be enjoyn'd; and yet now cry out upon our Ceremonies; or, at least, would have them left at liberty.

N. C. What Ceremonies and Worship do you mean?

C. Was not the taking of the Solemn League and Covenant a piece of Religion?

N.C. Yes, it was an Oath.

C. Read then an Ordinance of 2 *Febr.* 1643. and you will find, it is ordain'd, among other things, that during the time that the Minister read the whole Covenant to the people, *the whole Congregation should be uncovered*: There is one Ceremony, which now you will by no means indure should be impoſed on you at the hearing of Sermons. Then, at the end of reading it, they appoint that *all shall take it standing*: There is another Ceremony. And lastly, that *they should lift up their right hand bare*: That's another if not two Ceremonies more. For they enjoyn them to lift up *the right Hand* not *the left*; and that it should be *bare*, not covered with a Glove. And this very Ordinance touching the *Manner of the taking the* Covenant, they desired might be confirm'd by Act of Parliament; as you may see in the *Propositions sent to his Majesty at* Newcastle, *July* 11. 1646. Pray tell me, if you can, or else make enquiry, Why they did not leave men to their way and manner of doing this Religious Act; seeing they would have no body tied to a Posture now in the Worship of God.

N.C. I will enquire; For I know no reason of it.

C. If you please, ask them another thing; which is, Why they do not take their own Advice which they give about the Covenant? For if they would, the Covenant need not keep them from doing that, which otherwise many of them profess they could do.

N.C. You must be at the pains to interpret your self, for I know not what you intend.

C. The Parliament, in the Ordinance, now mentioned, desire the Assembly of Divines to prepare an Exhortation for the better taking of the Covenant, which should be read together with it. Now in that Exhortation (which was voted to be printed, *Feb.* 9. 1643.) the Assembly intreat the *Episcopal Clergy*, (who said they could

could not take the Covenant, because it was against their former Oaths) to consider this, which is the thing I would have them consider now; *That if any Oath be found into which any Ministers or others have entred unwarranted by the Laws of God and the Land, in this Case they must teach themselves and others what such Oaths call for, Repentance, not Perjury in them.*

N.C. I know what you are going to infer. But they will not yield that this Covenant was unwarrantable by the Laws of God and the Land, and therefore they will not repent of it.

C. It was plainly against the Laws of the Land, and those reasonable and good Laws: from thence I conclude, it was against the Laws of God, which would have us obey humane Laws, (that do not contradict them) and not combine together to destroy them.

N.C. They will never grant, it was against the Laws of the Land; and I think, you cannot prove it.

C. Did they not Covenant to endeavour to preserve the Reformed Religion in the Church of *Scotland* in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government?

N.C. Yes, its the first Branch of the Covenant.

C. And did they not next of all Covenant to indeavor to reform Religion in these Kingdoms of *England* and *Ireland*, in all Points according to the Examples of the best Reformed Churches?

N.C. Yes.

C. Then they were bound to reform us according to the Pattern of *Scotland*: For that Church must needs be the best Reformed, which needs no Reformation; as it seems the Church of *Scotland* did not, being to be preserved by them just as it was.

N.C. What of all this?

C. Then I will prove they bound themselves in an Oath against the Laws of the Land. For our Laws

make the King *Supreme Governour over all persons and in all causes*: But the Presbyterial Government as it was in *Scotland*, (and was intended to be here) though it allow the King to be Supreme Governour over all *persons*, (as they are *his* Subjects) yet will not subject all *Causes* to his Government; because Christ, according to the Discipline, *is the only spiritual King and Governour over his Kirk*. As much as to say, they are subject only to Christ in some things.

N. C. This is only a Collection which you make from several things compared together, in which you may be deceived. Sure they never intended to set up such a Government here.

C. That you may not be left therefore to my uncertain Reasonings (as you will esteem them) in this particular; You may be satisfied about the Mind of the Assembly, if you be at all acquainted with the History of the late Times. By that I am informed, they intended to bring the same Government among us that was in *Scotland*: And, Secondly, they thought the Parliament was obliged to set it up by vertue of the Covenant. When these two things are proved, I believe you will be of my mind, that they took an Oath against the Laws, and therefore ought not to persist in it, but repent of it.

N. C. I shall be glad to hear them proved.

C. You must know then, that the Parliament declared for Presbyterial Government, and passed most of the particulars brought them from the Assembly without any material alteration; *saving the point of Commissioners*: as they tell us in a Declaration of *April* 27. 1646.

N. C. What's the reason it was not set up?

C. Have patience, and I will tell you. *These only Commissioners* stood in the way, which the Assembly would

would not admit of; as the Parliament would not admit of their Arbitrary Government.

N. C. Why do you call it so.

C. The Title of the Declaration tells you, that the intention of it is, among other things, to secure the people against *all Arbitrary Government, viz.* in the Church, which they spoke of before. But that you may be sure of it; they let you know, when they come to that part of it, which concerns *Church-Government*, that the Presbytery challeng'd an *Arbitrary Power*, which they could not grant. The reason was because they would have set up *ten thousand Judicatories within the Kingdom* which should have had a supreme Authority over us in many things. *And this was demanded in such a way* (as they proceed to tell us) *as is not consistent with the Fundamental Laws and Government of the same, and by necessary consequence excluding the Power of the Parliament of* England *in the exercise of that Jurisdiction.* This was the very cause (as they farther inform us) why they had settled no Government since their sitting, because *they could not subject themselves and the People of the Land*, to so vast a power as the Presbytery challeng'd; *which*, they tell us a little after, *would have been for the Civil Magistrate to part with some of his Power out of his hands.* Now before we go any farther, I pray tell me, who was the Supreme Civil Magistrate then, but the KING? And how will you excuse these men from going about to rob him of a part of his Power, and wrest it out of his hands?

N. C. Sure, they did not Covenant to do this.

C. We shall try that by and by. But that you may better know how they meant to go to work, and to over-rule the Supreme Power in many Causes; you must understand these things. That it being resolved by both Houses, that all persons guilty of notorious

and scandalous Offences should be suspended from the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, the Assembly likewise resolved, that these two Powers lay in the Eldership or Presbytery, and only in them. First, *the Power of judging and declaring what are such notorious and scandalous offences, for which persons guilty thereof are to be kept from the Lords Supper*: And then, *the power of convening before them, trying and actually suspending from the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, such offenders accordingly*. Whereupon the *Commons* desire to know *what certain and particular Rules expressed in the Word of God the Eldership or Presbytery have, whereby to direct them both in the exercise and execution of those powers aforesaid*, as you read in the Questions propounded by them to the Assembly, *April* the 1st. 1646. Next, they desire to know, *Why the Supreme Magistrate may not so judge and determine what are the aforesaid notorious and scandalous offences, and the matter of Suspension for the same, and in what particulars concerning the Premisses, the said Supreme Magistracy is by the word of God excluded*. And lastly, they would be resolved *what should hinder them to appoint Commissioners to judge of Scandals not enumerated, if they are authorized by the Ordinance of Parliament, and wherein to make profession of such Commissioners was contrary to the way of Government which Christ had appointed*. By these Questions I believe you clearly see what Authority the Eldership intended to assume, if the Parliament would have suffered them. But nothing more declares their meaning than their refusal to receive such *Commissioners* as were now mentioned, in which they were so pertinacious that it hindred the settling of the Government, which else might have been set up long before? As the *Commons* there tell us. This was a notorious argument, that they took themselves to be sole Judges in some Causes, which, in the judgment of the *Commons*, was to exclude the Supreme Power, and

to

to overthrow the antient and Fundamental Laws of the Realm, about which they express their true intentions in this Declaration, as they tell us in the title of it.

And now, I have but one thing more to prove, which is briefly this; That they would have had this Authority set up by virtue of the Covenant, which any body may understand by what the *Commons* there declare; *that they will not suffer any one to impose an interpretation of the Covenant upon them, other than they themselves think to be suitable to the just ends for which it was agreed.* And withal, *they desire the Nation not to receive impressions of any forced Constructions of the Covenant, which, in case of any doubt arising, they say, is only to be expounded by them, by whose Authority it was established.* This doth plainly enough inform us, that the Assembly urged the Parliament to settle that Arbitrary Government in pursuance of the Covenant. And if so, then their Oath, (as they took it) was contrary to the Laws of the Realm, as their very Masters declare; and would force the supreme Magistrate's Power, out of his hands, which is contrary to the Law of God: And therefore they ought not any longer to hold themselves bound by it, but rather should repent, as they advise others to do in that case. To sum up the whole business: An Oath that is not warranted by the Laws of God & the Land ought to be repented of. Your Ministers took an Oath, not warranted by the Laws of God and the Land, but contrary to them. Therefore they ought to repent of it. The former Proposition, is their own. The latter is partly theirs, and partly the Commons of *England*. For your Ministers expounded the Covenant as if it obliged them to set up the Presbytery in an absolute Power; and the Commons declared the exercise of such a power to be against the Fundamental Laws of the Realm, & the Authority of the Supreme Magistrate. (I might add, but that you little

regard it, that, His MAJESTY in his Proclamation declared it an unwarrantable Oath, *October* 9. 1643.) And therefore do you and they see, whether the Conclusion do not unavoidably follow, and make a good use of it I beseech you before it be too late.

N. C. As *Paul* said to *Agrippa*, that he almost perswaded him to be a *Christian*; so I must say to you, that you almost perswade me to be a *Conformist*, and come to Church.

C. I wish, as S. *Paul* said then, that you were not almost, but altogether, such as I am, I mean, that you would not only come thither, but with such reverence and seriousness as becomes the Service of God. But to come and sit, or loll, or look about, or whisper and talk, as many do, methinks is as bad as staying away. Nay, it seems to be far worse, because it is a more publick Affront to God, even while we are in his presence; an open Scorn of his Worship, and a Contempt of all his people that devoutly joyn in it. Therefore, for the love of God, never involve your self in this guilt, as I see too many, even of the great ones do, who shew not half so much Reverence before God in the time of Divine Service, as the people do before the meanest Justice of Peace; nay, in his absence, before his Country-Clerk. *Lord, lay not this Sin to their charge.* And as I would desire you to pray with Reverence, so to hear the Sermon also, with due Attention, and without any Prejudice or Passion. Lay aside all naughty and corrupt Affections, which blind the Understanding and will not let it discern the clearest Truth. Witness the Pharisees, who could not see the most necessary things concerning everlasting Salvation, though manifestly delivered in Holy-Scripture, and plainly proved by many Illustrious Miracles: and all because they were Covetous, Proud, Self-conceited,

and

and loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. For what was more clearly set down in their Books than the time of *Christ's* Coming, together with the Characters or Marks of his Person, when he should appear? And what was more necessary to be known than him, when he came among them? In what were they so much concern'd every way, as to receive and acknowledge him? And yet, notwithstanding, they could not see him, even when they saw him. They resisted the Holy Ghost it self, in the Prophets both Old and New. They could not endure such a *Christ*, as taught them to be humble and pure in heart, and heavenly-minded, and meek, and merciful, and peaceable, and patient under all injuries, and obedient to Government; and that would not oppose *Cæsar*, and advance them to Power and Dominion. From whence you see how necessary it is to follow the Counsel of S. *Peter*, 1 *Epist.* 2. 1, 2. *and laying aside all Malice, and all Guile, and all Hypocrisies, and Envies, and Evil-speaking; as a new-born Babe desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.* Do not think I take too much upon me thus to instruct you. I do but repeat what I have heard from some of my Instructers. And our Minister told us the other day, that some render the last words thus: Desire the *reasonable* (or rational) *Milk without mixture*; it being the same expression, which is in *Rom.* 12. 1. where we read of *reasonable service*. But that I find is a thing few care for: As little reason as you please will suffice them. So their Fancies or their Affections be but tickled, they care not whether it be with Reason or without. Any little Toy takes them; and if the Exposition of Scripture which is given them, be but pretty, they never mind whether it be solid or no. Now this, I have been instructed, proceeds from a Vicious Affection; from a lazy, slothful,

disposition

disposition of mind; from a lothness to be at any pains to understand the Truth; nay, sometimes from all evil Affections; from a love of the Flesh and Sensual things, and a too great strangeness and averseness to all the Concerns of a Soul. And assure your self, there is no ignorance so black and dark, as this which proceeds from corrupt affections. That which is the effect only of Weakness of Parts, want of Opportunity, ill Education, or bad Instruction, may find some help, and be in great measure cured. A man of very mean natural parts, that hath an honest heart, may come to understand much: But this that I am speaking of, being chosen and affected, is in a manner incurable. Men love it and are concerned to maintain it, and will not understand the clearest Reasons, but shut their Eyes against them. And therefore if you would profit by any Sermon, come with a fit and unprejudiced mind, with an upright and true heart, and so you may be convinced of your errors, or grow in wisdom and understanding, and finally, think your self as happy in our Company, as any where else.

N. Gu. You speak very reasonably and discreetly. But if I still retain dissatisfied, I hope you will love me, as one Neighbour should do another.

G. Make no doubt of it. And the greatest act of Charity I can exercise you in, is to advise you how you should behave your selves, while you continue to dissent from us. You were wont in the beginning of these Differences, to call your selves the *Brethren*. This was the Language of your Fore-fathers, who begg'd that they might be for born, and treated gently, and like the *twelve Children of Jacob*, driven no faster, than they were able to go. But now none drive so furiously, as you. Nothing will serve your turn but to be the foremost, I mean, the Leaders of all: You would be Masters of the Law; you would Rule and Govern, as if you were the wisest

wisest and strongest Christians, nay, illuminated with a more singular degree of Knowledge, than any body else. It doth not suffice you to let alone what is enjoyn'd you, but you arreign it before all your Neighbours; you judge and condemn it; nay, you thwart and oppose it; you would fain do Execution upon it, and having pull'd it down, set up your own Fancies in the room. And so far hath this Confidence carried you, that you would fain set up your Fancies in all the World, if you were able. For you know very well where you invited all Reformed Churches, and that in a way of Prayer, that they would associate themselves with you in your, or the like Covenant. I must desire you therefore, as you love your own and the Kingdom's Peace, to have a lower opinion of your selves and Gifts; and so to abate of your Confidence, and your Forwardness and Violence to impose upon others. Set not so high an esteem upon your own Models and Draughts of Government. Be content to obey, rather than rule. Let nothing of Pride, Ambition, Vain-glory, and love of popular Esteem, bear sway in your hearts. And oh that we could see all these evil spirits cast out by your Prayers and Fastings! Approve your selves to be Tender-conscienc'd, by your tender care in all your actions to be void of offence to God and Man. Shew that nothing in the world but your fear to displease God keeps you from us, by your humble carriage; by your speaking well of all, as near as you can; by saying nothing against the establish'd Religion; by honouring your Superiours; by meeting very secretly, (if you must needs assemble in greater Companies, than the Law allows) that so you may not give a publick Offence. And I beseech you never meet in time of Divine Service. Pray your Ministers to search & examine, as much as they can, whether none of their Auditors come to them only out of humour and love of Novelty; and that they

would

would exhort all that can, to go to the publick Ordinances. For which end let them acknowledge in plain terms, that the Worship of God among us is lawful, and far from being Anti-christian; that there are many godly men among us, that they themselves have received benefit from their Labours. Let them expect their sorrow, that they are not enlightned enough to see the lawfulness of using some Ceremonies; and desire the people not to follow their Example without their Reasons. Speak well of your Governours, and reprove those that do not. Believe not Rumors and Reports, and take care you be not the spreaders of them. Keep a day of Humiliation for this Sin among others: That you have been the Authors or Abettors of so many false and scandalous Stories concerning the Bishops and others. And do not excuse your selves by saying that some Stories are true; for I can demonstrate, if need be, that it is not the manner of your people to examine carefully whether things be true or no, before they divulge them; but presently they run away, when they have got a Tale by the end, and carry it about the Town. By which means, right Reverend persons (which is a horrid shame) have been openly charg'd in publick Assemblies with things notoriously false, without any ground at all. All which proceeds from your unmortified Passions of Anger, Hatred, and Uncharitableness, which make you hastily believe any thing that's bad of those you do not like. Let these things therefore be bewailed and reformed: As also your wresting of the Scripture, and bold, but vain, pretences to the Spirit; in which, I beseech you, hereafter shew greater Modesty. It would do well also, if you thought upon all the Contempt which hath been poured by you, or by your means, not only upon the Bishops, but their Order and Function; and consequently upon all the Antient Churches, who

flourished

flourished so happily under that Government: Upon all the present Ministery also, for whom no name could be found bad enough: Nay, and more than this, upon all Civil Governours, for whom there is scarce left any such thing, as Honour and Reverence. And now I speak of them, let me again intreat you not to oppose their Commands, if you cannot obey them; but only let them alone, and forbear to do them. And let this Forbearance, be with much Modesty, Humility, Silence, and apparent Trouble, that you cannot comply with the publick Orders. Intreat the Forbearance also of your Governours with much Submission. Live peaceably with your Brethren. Let as few as may be, observe your dissent. Labour to hide and cover it, as sure you would do, if you thought it a weakness. Do not seek to make or keep a Party. Endeavour not to draw more company to your meetings. Let not those be flattered who are wont to come there, as if they were *Christs Jewels*, the *Garden of God*; intimating that others are but the Pebbles in the Common or the High-ways. Suffer them not to believe that they are *the little flock*: or to fancy themselves *under Persecution*; and that they are bearing *witness and testimony to Jesus*. And be sure to disown those who abuse the people with such tales as these, that the *Gospel is in a manner gone*, and *God departed* from the Nation; only he hath left them behind as his *Agents* and *Ambassadors*, whom you must keep as a pledge of his Return: For if he call them home, then he is *quite gone*. These are the subtile devices to keep up the Faction, and bring back our former troubles, which they call *God's Return to the Nation*. These are the crafty Arts whereby they ingage the hearts of the people to *them* (being *God's Agents*) and draw them from their Governours. These are the Mountebank-tricks, whereby poor

souls

ſtuls are made to believe, that all but they are Phyſicians of no value; and that healing muſt come by their means. *Let not your Soul come into their Secrets; be you not united unto their Aſſembly:* But heartily acknowledge that we are ſtill God's people, and that he is among us. This is the way to be approved of God, and to win favour alſo in the eyes of men; Who will then be convinced you have tender Conſciences in thoſe matters wherein we differ, when you are exactly conſcientious in all other things. But if your Conſciences be ſo brawny as to be inſenſible of thoſe ſpiritual Wickednesſes now mentioned, you muſt blame your ſelves, if your Governours be ſevere towards you.

N. C. That which you propoſe, I muſt confeſs, ſeems very reaſonable. But I pray, Where did you learn all theſe things?

C. There, where you may learn a great deal more of your Duty, than I believe you have heard in other places even at our own Pariſh Church: Where we are not flattered preſently into a conceit of our Saint-ſhip, nor hear perhaps every day of the priviledges of the Saints, but we are taught how to be Saints, and how to live like good Chriſtians, and to value this as a ſingular priviledge, that we have the Goſpel ſo plainly expounded to us, as to ſee how *bleſſed they are, who not only hear the Word of God, but alſo keep it.*

N. C. Truly Neighbor, as long as you live well, I ſhall alway deſire to maintain a Familiarity with you, though you be not of my mind; believing that you are a Chriſtian, though of another way. And I hope you will do the like with me.

C. I aſſured you of it before. But let me enter this Proviſo, that you talk no more about matters of Religion; for unleſs you be changed by this Diſcourſe, we diſagree ſo much, that it will be irkſome to us both.

N. C. Not

N.C. Not so; for I have learnt something of you; and if I can teach you nothing, yet I may learn more. Therefore I pray let us not cease to talk of the best things. What? would you have us converse together as meer Heathens?

C. No. If you will consult how we may do most good in the Parish wherein we live, and be a means of our Neighbours Benefit and Comfort; I shall be right glad of it. But to dispute, I see is bootless; and so far from doing good to most, that it rather doth them harm.

N.C. Why did you enter into a Dispute with me?

C. There are here and there some well minded, honest hearts, who have left one Ear open to hear the contrary party, and are resolved to weigh all things without prejudice. With such there is some pleasure and profit to reason: And I took you for one of that stamp. If I was deceived, pray pardon me this attempt, and I shall not trouble you so again.

N.C. I hope I shall not deceive you; for I intend to consider these things better when I am alone; and so bid you Farewel.

C. I pray God be with you.

THE END.

Imprimatur,

Nov. 7. 1668.

Tho. Tomkyns, *Reverendissimo in Christo Patri ac Domino, Dom.* Gilb. Arch. Cantuar. *à Sacr. Dom.*